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DOES THE CAR HAVE A FUTURE?

Section Two

QUESTIONS OF SPORT: £40,000 TO BE WON

See page 22

HOTEL BREAKS

Two nights for the price of one
See page 18 for more

'Everyone in there will have been killed in five minutes. It is a terrible, terrible thing to do'

Phil Reeves reports from near Pervomayskoye as the Russians take on 150 Chechen rebels

The morning had been as still, cold and grey as a gravestone. Then, at 9am sharp, the onslaught began. Huge thuds and crashes rolled across the frozen landscape of northern Dagestan and echoed around the foothills of neighbouring Chechnya. The shadow boxing and posturing were over: Russia's military machine was moving in.

Six helicopter gunships circled the village of Pervomayskoye, blasting it with rockets as they reeled against the skyline like huge, malevolent insects. Flares came tum-

equal and grotesque contest.

By lunchtime, the heart of the village lay behind a curtain of flame. And yet for most of the afternoon the assault continued uninterrupted. It seemed the Russians, who had planned to take the place in a day, were finding it harder than they expected to overcome the 150 rebels. Almost every building in the village seemed to have been blasted, but we could still hear the crackle of machine guns as the Chechens fought back.

As darkness fell, with the village still at least partly in Chechen hands, Russian officials said they had killed 60 rebels and freed nine of the captives.

They admitted to only four Russian soldiers killed and 14 wounded. But earlier reports had told of "several" Russian armoured troop carriers destroyed.

We could see a gaping hole in the roof of the village school where, according to local Dagestanis, some of the hostages were being held. This, however, was denied by the Russian Federal Security Service whose chief, General Mikhail Barsukov, had personally given the order for the battle to begin.

The school, a long white structure on the village's eastern flank, was consumed by flames. By now, the helicopter gunships had drawn back and were flying in huge circles, around the perimeter of the battlefield.

Not 100 yards from where we stood there were three big Russian field guns, well out of the range of the Chechens, who were armed only with assault rifles, heavy machine guns and rocket propelled grenade launchers.

We watched the Russian gunners lounging around, hands in



Going in for the kill: A Russian soldier advances to a position nearer Pervomayskoye yesterday during the assault on the village. Troops, backed by artillery and aircraft, were ordered to make a full-scale attack after Chechen gunmen were reported to have started killing hostages. The soldier is seen from a distance, advancing towards a position. The background shows a hazy, smoke-filled landscape.

Inside

Tough-talking Yeltsin sends in the troops

- page 9

Tragic results of a bloody drama

- page 15

bling out of them, decoys against heat-seeking missiles. The Russian artillery opened up, like ghostly timpani.

If this was, as claimed, a surgical operation, to free more than 100 hostages held by Salman Raduyev and his Chechen fighters, what would a full-scale assault look and sound like?

Shell after shell slammed into the settlement, which soon lay beneath a gauze of dust and smoke. Some came from smaller Russian guns; others came from tanks, gruff hammer blows, followed by deeper thumps when their missiles landed. We could hear the whoosh of Grad missiles and rocket-propelled grenades - and the churning sound of small arms fire.

At one point, a Russian tank began spewing black smoke and then it exploded - an apparently rare triumph for Raduyev's men in this un-

As the battle raged in front of us, the ego of an injured and thunderously angry president seemed to be in play.

Though ill and unpopular, Boris Yeltsin has shown every symptom of a man preparing to run for re-election.

He knows he must win back the respect of a nation in which

Photograph: Gleb Garanich/Reuters

many hanker for strong leadership. No effort was made to stop television cameras from recording the battle from a grandstand position in a neighbouring village. Rather it was a spectacle that the Kremlin seemed to want us - or at least their fellow Russians - to witness.

Psychiatrists quit over risks to patients

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

Consultants are quitting acute psychiatry in the National Health Service because of the increasing risks which patients are facing from overloaded NHS services.

Dr Massimo Riccio, 43, a consultant at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London, who left the NHS for the private sector two weeks ago, said he had resigned after having to "deal with more patients, who are more severely ill, with less beds and facilities".

He will be followed soon by Dr Cosmo Hallstrom, 49, a consultant at the Gordon Hospital, in London, who said the stress of deciding whether to discharge patients before they are ready to go, to admit others who are more acutely ill, was producing "burn out" among staff. Each time there was a suicide or killing, he said, "I think, there but for the grace of God, go I."

'When people get scared they take notice: that is what is happening with Britain's creaking system' - Leading article, page 14

Labour yesterday called for a moratorium on further bed closures in the wake of the Royal College of Psychiatrists' report on homicides and suicides. John Bowis, the junior health minister, conceded that "we must make sure we have the range of beds to back up the community services".

It is the lack of those which Dr Riccio says has left hospitals dealing with an increasingly disturbed mix of patients. "A lot of funding has gone into very worthwhile causes," Dr Riccio

said. These included the court diversion scheme to place mentally ill offenders in hospital rather than prison, and homelessness projects. They have "worked well but unearthed a lot of otherwise undetected mental illness", he said.

The result was mounting pressure on acute beds, while the secure units meant to take the potentially most violent patients had silted up.

"I recently had an acutely psychotic patient in a very disturbed state on an open ward who was caught with two daggers under the bed. We spent three or four days phoning every secure unit in England, Scotland and Wales trying to find him a place."

Consultants, he said, "now have to take risks in deciding who to discharge, in order to admit patients who we know are acutely ill. In cases like that, I am damned if I do and damned if I don't".

Hunting for beds, page 8

Minister backs down on prisoners in chains

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

Ann Widdecombe, the Home Office Minister, yesterday made a humiliating apology for misleading the Commons over the shackling of pregnant prisoners.

Her "unreserved apology" came as the Government prepared to soften its controversial chaining policy.

Faced with strong criticism and the threat of court action over "inhumane and degrading" treatment, ministers look set to meet medical concerns that no mother-to-be should be held in chains in a maternity unit and that prison staff should remain outside the labour room. Ministers are considering demanding a risk assessment for women before any are put in chains to attend court, child custody hearings or hospital appointments.

Richard Tilt, the acting head of the Prison Service, admitted he was "not happy with the outcome of the present policy."



He promised to look at a case, which was highlighted in the Independent on Sunday, of an unconvicted woman prisoner seriously ill in a hospital Aids ward who was held in chains 24 hours a day. Yesterday lawyers for the woman, a drug addict with no previous convictions,

accused of conspiracy to supply heroin worth about £300, failed in an emergency bail application. Suspicions that Downing Street put pressure on ministers to back down came as Ms Widdecombe took to the Commons floor. She then retracted a claim she made last week that London's Whittington hospital, which deals with shackled inmates from Holloway, the country's largest women's prison, had not raised concerns about the practice.

The minister blamed bad advice from Prison Service officials. "I deeply regret that the advice which I had been given about this correspondence, and which I in turn gave to the House in good faith, was wrong. I offer my unreserved apologies to the House," she said.

Labour's Home Affairs spokesman, Jack Straw, said he was now writing to Mr Howard, to demand that the whole policy be reviewed.

'Minister for trouble', page 2

I.Q. of 145 and Can't Remember?

A FAMOUS international publisher reports that there is a simple technique for acquiring a powerful memory which can pay you real dividends in both business and social advancement. It works like magic to give you added poise, self-confidence and greater popularity.

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Forget facts, figures?

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IN BRIEF

Business bypassed

Newbury businessmen have accused their MP of misleading the press when he says they are in favour of the town's controversial bypass. Page 3

Drugs policy 'ineffective'

The Government's policy of "getting tough" on drugs to reduce crime among young people will have little impact, according to a study that found no direct evidence that the two are linked. Page 7

Sir Rocco loosens his grip on Forte empire

DAVID HELLIER

Sir Rocco Forte relinquished some of his grip on the Forte restaurants and hotels empire when he bowed to shareholder power yesterday and split his double role as chairman and chief executive.

As a result, the City marked Granada's shares up 7p to 670p in expectation of victory in the bid battle which closes in eight days. Sir Rocco's move was

widely seen in the City as a last-ditch attempt to fend off a hostile £3.8bn takeover bid from Granada, the media to leisure conglomerate, which threatens to end forever the management links between the Forte family and the group they founded. Some saw the move as "too little, too late".

Sir Rocco's position as chairman will be taken over by Sir Anthony Tennant, who is group deputy chairman. Sir Anthony,

also non-executive chairman of Christie's, the fine art auction house, said it was not the case that the bid was all over "bar the shouting". The new Eton and Cambridge-educated chairman sees his role as chairing the company's board and liaising with shareholders while Sir Rocco continues, at least for the next eight days, to run the day-to-day management of the group.

Mark Finnie, a leading expert on the bid, said the reshuffle

"probably wins a degree of support from certain institutional funds". He said that some people were expecting Sir Rocco to move to chairman and to appoint a new chief executive. Mr Finnie expected the outcome to be "very close".

Granada's chief executive, Gerry Robinson, was predictably dismissive. "This amounts to nothing more than a titular change - Sir Anthony Tennant has been deputy chair-

man for the last three years and Sir Rocco has been chief executive for 13 years. Forte's performance during those 13 years speaks for itself."

Backs to the wall, page 16

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news

Widdecombe's gaffe: Home Office right-winger's reputation for safe pair of hands is dealt blow by prison row

'Minister for trouble' hits an own goal

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

Ann Widdecombe, the doughty prisons minister, was until yesterday regarded as one of the few ministers in the Major government with a safe pair of hands. Ms Widdecombe, 48, has been so frequently on the television defending the Home Office recently, one minister's wife described her as "the minister for trouble".

The daughter of a high-ranking civil servant in the Ministry

of Defence, she was educated at the Royal Naval School in Singapore and a strict convent school at Bath, before studying Latin at Oxford. She made her mark as secretary of the Oxford Union in 1971. After Oxford she went into marketing with Unilever, and was the financial administrator of London University until winning her Maidenhead seat in 1987.

Quickly establishing herself as a right-winger, she co-founded Women and Families for Defence with Lady Olga Maitland to campaign against CND-supporting Labour MPs in the battle over Cruise missiles.

In the Commons, she attracted criticism from women for supporting David Alton's Bill to lower the ceiling on abortion to 18 weeks - her speeches on the abortion issue underlined her combative and competent style. Despite being a supporter of hanging, anti-abortion and fiercely pro-nuclear weapons, she failed to win promotion under Margaret Thatcher, gaining her first post as a parliamentary aide to Tristan Garel-Jones, the former Foreign Office minister.

A strong supporter of John Major, she was given her first ministerial post by him at Social Security, but saw more charismatic women promoted above her, including Virginia Bottomley and Gillian Shephard. Being only five foot one has perhaps made it more difficult for Ms Widdecombe to make an impact. It probably contributed last week to the unprecedented barrage of abuse she faced for defending the Home Office over shackling women prisoners. A spinster with no children, she has been accused by Labour of having no knowledge of child birth.



Accused: Ann Widdecombe has faced a 'barrage of abuse' Photograph: Edward Sykes

Her decision to become a Catholic in protest at the ordination of women was regarded as further evidence of her coldness towards women in general, a charge which she strongly denies. Her simple, straightforward approach to religion, as well as politics and most other things, was exemplified by her comment on her conversion to the Roman Catholic faith. She said then: "To have a church which calls a sin a sin and has done with it, is a blessed relief."

During the Christmas recess, as Minister of State for the Home Office, she defended

the Government on difficult issues, including CS gas spray for the police and the expulsion of the Saudi rebel, Mohammed al Masari.

The announcement that Ms Widdecombe was to make a "personal statement" raised speculation to fever pitch at Westminster that she was about to resign. But quitting would have been out of character, but few could have blamed her. The personal abuse heaped on her looks was rare even for the present government.

By making a personal statement, admitting a mistake had

been made by officials, Ms Widdecombe also avoided being cross-examined on the policy of the Home Office in prisons. As the senior minister below the Home Secretary, she cannot afford to show any doubt about the policy adopted by Michael Howard.

She gave no hint of the doubts she privately feels about prison policy. In particular, the sacking of Derek Lewis as chief executive of the Prison Service. But her sympathy for Mr Lewis is one of factor which makes her difficult to categorise as a knee-jerk Thatcherite right-winger.

The Chairman's Office
4 December, 1995 - secretary
Baroness Cumberlege
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
Department of Health
Richard House

Dear Baroness Cumberlege

I wonder if it would be possible for me to come and see you to discuss matters relating to the women prisoners? As you will be aware, there are grave professional concerns over the effects of the tightening of custody policies towards pregnant women prisoners. As the main hospital providing care for women from Holloway Prison, we are much concerned with the changes current policies are posing for both clinical and custodial staff.

Written proof: A letter showing hospital concern about chaining and (below) pointing out the minister's error

11 January, 1996

Miss Ann Widdecombe MP
Minister of State for the Home Office
20 Queen Anne's Gate
London
SW1Y 5AT

Dear Mrs Widdecombe

I am writing to clarify this hospital's position regarding the issue of the care of women prisoners following your statement in the House of Commons on Tuesday 9 January 1996.

I am afraid that you have been misinformed as to the hospital's position regarding the effects of the changes in custody practice in April last year on the services we offer to prisoners from Holloway.

Letters reveal hospital's concern

HEATHER MILLS

The Whittington Hospital had written to both the Prison Service and to ministers about their concerns over the shackling of pregnant prisoners, before Anne Widdecombe claimed in the Commons that there had been no complaint.

Five months ago, Ian Kidson, the hospital's chief executive, raised the issue of handcuffs and chains in a letter to Janet King, the governor of Holloway jail. He enclosed a letter from the director of midwifery expressing "great concern amongst the staff within the maternity unit regarding the new policy by the Home Office that all patients are handcuffed and chained to wardens."

Hospital staff had even secured a meeting last November with the Prison Service to discuss the issue. It was suggested that a group midwifery, obstetric and gynaecology service be provided within the jail, in order to avoid the practice.

But as there was no change in policy, Baroness Hayman, chairman of the Whittington Hospital Trust, wrote this time to Baroness Cumberlege, the health minister, seeking another meeting. She wrote: "As you may be aware there are grave professional concerns over the effects of the tightening of custody policies towards pregnant women prisoners. As the main hospital providing care for women from Holloway Prison, we are much concerned with the dilemmas current policies are posing for both clinical and custodial staff."

It was against this background, that Miss Widdecombe, ill-prepared by a short briefing with prison officials, wrongly told the Commons that the Whittington had not registered a complaint.

After yesterday's "unreserved apology" for misinforming MPs, a spokeswoman for the Whittington said staff were pleased that Miss Widdecombe had clarified the position.

IN BRIEF

Maxwell jurors hit by chest infections

Jurors in the trial of the Maxwell brothers were sent to a hotel for an eighth night after failing to reach verdicts and being struck by illness.

Earlier the judge, Mr Justice Phillips, said that he realised several jurors were suffering from chest infections brought on by the "unhealthy atmosphere" of the jury room. He told them the court would provide them with humidifiers in order to improve the atmosphere and encouraged them to go for walks around Lincoln's Inn Fields, which adjoins the court.

So far the jury has spent 47 hours considering verdicts against Kevin Maxwell, 36, his brother Ian, 39, and Larry Trautenberg a former financial adviser to the Maxwell empire. All deny conspiring to defraud the pension funds. Kevin alone denies a similar charge of conspiring with his father, Robert, to misuse pension fund assets.

Miners' victory

Thousands of miners and former pitmen suffering from an industrial disease known as Vibration White Finger will be able to seek compensation after a test case ruling. Lawyers and trade unions anticipate claims against British Coal could total millions of pounds after Judge John Stephenson, sitting at the High Court in Newcastle upon Tyne, said the company should have known of the risks of VWF resulting from power tools used in the industry from January 1973.

Action on smoking

Parents who smoke are subjecting their children to a form of abuse with consequences for their health, development, and future prospects, doctors warned as they stepped up their campaign to persuade the Government to ban tobacco advertising. The warning coincides with the introduction of a 10 Minute Rule Bill in the Commons by the Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes, which provides draft legislation for the banning of tobacco advertising.

Wise counsel

Barristers have voted to accept a complaints system which for the first time would allow dissatisfied clients to seek redress for poor work. However, clients will not be able to complain about the barristers' performances in court, only their work preparing for trials.

Arms talks continue

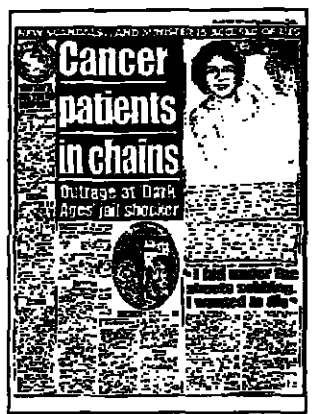
The three-man international body on arms de-commissioning in Northern Ireland, led by the former American senator George Mitchell, held another round of talks in Belfast and Dublin amid indications that its report may not be ready until Friday or even next week.

Baby bliss

Carmen Daniels, whose son Rhys and daughter Charly were born with Batten's disease, has given birth to another daughter, named Bliss, who is free from the incurable genetic illness.



Bad press: Media coverage fuelled public outrage



Cancer patients in chains

Daughter in new court battle over sculptor's legacy

JOJO MOYES

Worth millions of pounds by Britain's most famous sculptor, Henry Moore, were at the centre of a new dispute yesterday as the sculptor's daughter renewed her High Court battle for their control.

Mary Spencer Moore, who is acting under her married name Mary Danowski, is appealing against a High Court judgment that passed ownership of her father's works to the Henry Moore Foundation in Perry Green, Hertfordshire.

In 1993, Ms Danowski was left facing six-figure court costs after failing in an attempt to claim £200m of her father's sculptures and drawings from the trust he set up in the final years of his life.

In 1976, she and her mother had helped Moore set up the foundation to safeguard and promote appreciation of his work. A year later, and until his death aged 88 in 1986, the sculptor became an employee of the foundation's trading arm,

HMF Enterprises, because of his worries about tax liabilities. The foundation was given his personal collection, and for the final 10 years of his life paid him a £45,000-a-year salary. In return his works from that time became the property of the trust.

Lord Irvine QC, representing Ms Danowski, 48, told the Court of Appeal yesterday that the argument centred on the ownership of the works created during that period.

"It is a pity that a major dispute such as this has arisen over one of the country's greatest artists of the century and the body set up to protect his artistic legacy. But such a dispute has arisen, and we owe it to the artist that the dispute is correctly resolved," Lord Irvine said.

He said that Ms Danowski claimed that all her father's artist's copies of his works were his personal property and became part of his personal estate after his death.

Lord Irvine said the case was of great importance to the

art world because of the challenge it presented to the Artist's Copy Convention. The question to be answered was how far artistic freedom could be breached by "contractual fetters". Under the unwritten convention, sculptors are allowed to produce up to two versions of a limited edition which then become their own property to be disposed of as they wish.

Moore used to give these to his family, but after 1977 gave the artist's copies to the foundation. According to Lord Irvine, the foundation claimed that because Moore was an employee of HMF Enterprises, he had given up his rights to artists' copies and from the very moment of creation, everything he produced became the property of the company.

At the High Court in 1993, Mr Justice Evans-Lombe ruled against Ms Danowski and held that the 1977 agreement stated plainly that ownership of all works, including artist's copies, was vested in the company.

The case continues today.

Rail sell-off may be in the dark

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

The trains may have to stop for rail privatisation. Roger Salmon, the franchising director, has realised that he cannot sell the train operations to the private sector if any trains are running on the lines at the time of the transfer.

As a result, next month's handover of the first three lines, none of which run all night, will have to take place early in the morning. However, future services where all-night trains are operating will have to be sold when one of the late trains

reaches its destination, or a train will have to be cancelled to give time for the transfer to take place.

A spokesman at Mr Salmon's office said the problem was that if any trains were running at the precise time at which responsibility was transferred, "it will be impossible to allocate costs between the parties involved". Legal problems would also arise if there were an accident on the train during the time of its transfer.

Mr Salmon has therefore been consulting rail timetables to find a time when there are no services. Early on Sunday morn-

ing has emerged as the favourite, possibly as soon as 4 February, because there are no early-morning commuter trains on a Sunday.

Fortunately for Mr Salmon, the first three lines expected to go to the private sector next month - South West Trains, Great Western and London, Tilbury & Southend - do not have all-night services.

But with trains running until the early hours of Sunday, the transfer would have to take place between 1am and 4am. However, in terms of public relations, that time of the week would be a flop, as journalists

would be reluctant to travel on an early Sunday morning train, even if it was to celebrate Britain's first private train service for nearly half a century. The new companies also fear that if some minor local train becomes the first to be privatised, it runs a much greater risk of breaking down or being cancelled than a main commuter service or InterCity service.

Network SouthCentral, one of the next four franchises due to be allocated, runs trains all night to Gatwick airport. Then there may be the moment Mr Salmon dreads, when the trains have to stop for privatisation.

Royal Mail chief in strike warning

BARRIE CLEMENT

Leaders of 160,000 postal workers were warned yesterday that a threatened nationwide strike would be "absolutely daft."

The comments by John Roberts, new Royal Mail chief executive, come 48 hours ahead of a deadline issued by the Communication Workers' Union. Senior officials of the union are calling for a strike ballot unless management offers assurances tomorrow about the future of services.

Concern over the continuing existence of the second postal delivery and the increasing introduction of casual staff are behind a series of wildcat walkouts which last year accounted for one in three of days lost in British industry through industrial action.

Mr Roberts said he was confident rather than certain a dispute would be avoided. "A national strike would be daft for employees who would lose money and incredibly daft for customers who would think they were back in the bad old days."

He said there was no question of abolishing the second delivery, but indicated there could be a gradual and limited shift towards the employment of temporary and limited contract staff. Around 1,500 to 2,000 jobs are scheduled to go each year, largely through mechanisation, and around 1,500 casual employees would be taken on.

He said, however, that "casualisation" of employment formed no part of the plan and that the proportion of full-timers to part-timers would remain at around 80-20 for the foreseeable future. He con-

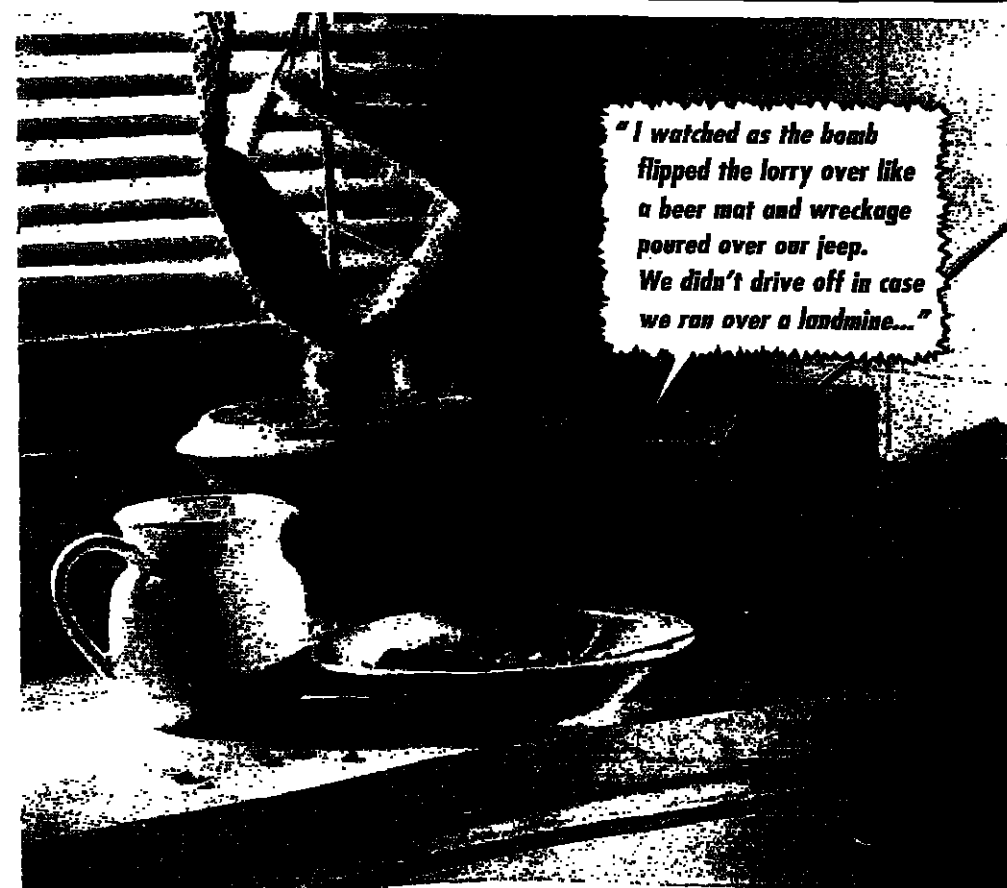
ceded that management had so far failed to reassure employees about their job security and said industrial relations would form a major part of his brief.

In a "state of the Royal Mail address", Mr Roberts said the Prime Minister's statement that privatisation of the Post Office might be in the Tory election manifesto, would not affect the way the business was run. Any sell-off was a matter for the Government, but it was important for any organisation to know exactly what was required by its biggest shareholder.

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"I watched as the bomb flipped the lorry over like a beer mat and wreckage poured over our jeep. We didn't drive off in case we ran over a landmine..."

THE HIT THAT STILL HAUNTS ANDY KERSHAW

Andy Kershaw, taking time off from Radio 1 to report from Rwanda. Our journalists and commentators scour the world for momentous, interesting and off-beat stories. 'From Our Own Correspondent', 11.30 Saturday and Thursday mornings.

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Newbury business chiefs to back protesters

NICHOLAS SCHOON

A group of leading Newbury businessmen will today declare their opposition to the town's controversial western bypass at a press conference organised with Friends of the Earth.

As contractors clearing the route of the bypass again failed to make significant progress yesterday, the executives said their MP, David Rendel, a Liberal Democrat, is misleading the public when he says that local

industry and commerce in Berkshire overwhelmingly favour the controversial road.

They say the bypass will do little to ease congestion caused by dense local traffic, and may even make it worse in places.

One of them, an executive head hunter, Adrian Foster-Fletcher, spent three days with road protesters as they clashed with security guards last week.

A local managing director, Paul Carter, said several meetings and a questionnaire have

shown many in the business community are unhappy about the nine-mile road leading through beautiful countryside and nature sites. He runs a computer company that employs 70.

Keith Berry, the managing director of another Newbury computer company, LanBase, which employs 50, said: "This new road is too high a price to pay. The countryside we've got here is special and needs looking after."

Clive Osborne, chairman of a group of electronics companies employing 200 in the town, said: "Common sense tells me that we can't go on like this."

The businessmen agree that the town needs relief from heavy traffic. A stream of juggernauts passes through on the A34 between the south coast ports and the Midlands, using a dual-carriageway bypass that was built in the Sixties.

Instead of a new road through open countryside, they favour improvements to the

existing one. Fly-overs or underpasses ought to be built at the five roundabouts which slow the traffic flow, and possibly a toll tunnel ought to be dug under the River Kennet, to replace the bridge.

They believe the new bypass will bring more housing, shopping and industrial sprawl to a town that has grown dramatically in the last 25 years, losing much of its character. "Why should it become like Slough?" said Mr Foster-Fletcher.

Just over a year ago, 50 executives heard Mr Rendel address a meeting of the Newbury Business Breakfast Club on the need for the western bypass, and voted unanimously against it. The club represents a cross-section of manufacturing and service industries in the town.

Late last year, three club members sent 500 copies of a questionnaire to local firms asking: "If a better route could be found, would you like it examined?" They received 140

responses, a high rate for a questionnaire, of which 110 were in favour.

Mr Rendel says most local bosses back the bypass. The local branch of the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce and the town's biggest commercial employer, Racal Vodafone, support it. "It was a question that was so biased and so pointed that I'm not surprised they got that response," Mr Rendel said.

"Polling suggests between one in six and one in eight New-

bury people are against the new bypass, and I think the feeling will be the same among local business people."

No progress was made on the road yesterday because of the demonstrators' protests. A chainsaw gang was forced to stop clearing trees at the southern end of the route after less than 30 minutes. There were 20 arrests, mostly for trespass. During the past week fewer than 400 of about 10,000 trees on the route have been felled.

Biometrics: identifying a new science

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Correspondent

Computers that recognise our signatures, voices, fingerprints or hand-shape could soon replace humans to check credit cards, immigration permits and benefit payments, say experts in the field of biometrics.

The Department of Employment is at present studying the results of the biggest trial of its kind in the world, where people at unemployment benefit offices in Liverpool and Tyneside had to sign on an electronic "tablet" to verify their identity. This was then checked against earlier signatures.

In 15 months, the system checked 200,000 signatures



Emma Newham: Biometrics common by 'end of decade'

from 20,000 people, and wrongly rejected just 0.1 per cent of applicants. Though a good forger can copy the shape of a signature, even the best cannot copy the acceleration and pressure of the original signatory.

Now the department may roll the system out to hundreds of offices across Britain. "It seems to have worked well in Liverpool," said Andrew Lewcock, head of the neural computing unit at AEA Technology, which developed the signature verification system. "Now they are looking at whether it's cost-effective." Such systems typically cost about £200 per unit, with each office needing about six. The department had no comment on when it might widen the use of the system.

The finance company Visa International will also be using the new technology. Next year Visa plans to introduce a new generation of "smart" credit cards with an on-board micro-

chip which can store an encoded signature, voice or fingerprint, making automatic verification possible. A Visa spokesman, Andrew Bapti, said that Visa had yet to decide which biometric to use.

Biometric systems can be programmed to identify any unique physical characteristic. Among those already in use are recognition systems for voice, signature, and the pattern of blood vessels in the retina at the back of the eye.

Emma Newham, editor of *Biometric Technology Today* magazine, said: "Everybody has been saying for the past 10 years that biometric systems would be in wide use in the next two years. It hasn't happened so far because the computing power hasn't been there. But once you have smart cards in widespread use, they will become commonplace. That should mean by the end of the decade."

Most biometric systems rely on powerful computers with "neural networks" - software that can pick out an essential pattern from a jumble of data.

Mr Lewcock said, "It's only become possible in the past five years to buy computers that are powerful enough to do this work for a reasonable price. In 1990 such power might have been just a dream. [but] today I can have a PC with more than enough power on my desk."

A British company announced earlier this week that it is developing a system which can distinguish people by smell. However, that will tend to be expensive - and so only useful to organisations requiring high security.

The US Immigration and Naturalisation Service has for some years been using a system which measures the ratios of finger lengths and handspan, for people who have previously been granted entry into the US without a visa.

The applicant puts their hand into a box, where a light system measures the ratio of finger lengths to the handspan. This is then recorded on the magnetic strip of a plastic card.

The amount of data needed is so small - just nine bytes - that it could be included in the machine-readable section of the new EU passport.



Catwalk kilt: Fashion Vivienne Westwood-style at Milan

Photographs: Chris Moore



'Westwood mixes historic costume and modern suiting'

Westwood lets her men rock again

TAMSI BLANCHARD
Milan

Vivienne Westwood showed yesterday that men can have all the fun that women have when it comes to dressing up.

The designer, who is queen of the womenswear catwalks in Paris, showed her menswear in Milan for the first time with a collection of 95 outfits that ranged from Sherlock Holmes suits to black patent leather zip-front mechanic's overalls, and from priest-like cassocks, and vibrant kilts complete with matching shirt, tie, jacket and socks.

Over-sized Prince of Wales check jackets were worn with matching Oxford bag trousers and delicate lace handkerchiefs flopped out of suit pockets. A stuffed bird of prey perched precariously on top of a turban and Highland blankets were tossed proudly over shoulders. And for the really daring there were solid diamante and sequinned corset-structured torso jackets with in-built muscles. At last, here was a collection for men to marvel at.

Westwood has been making menswear since 1970. When she and Malcolm McLaren set up their first shop, Let It Rock, the garments they produced were a

small collection of men's teddy boy suits. Her ideas shocked then as they still do.

Westwood's gentleman customers were spared the padded bum cages used for women. But they were allowed to wear all the accessories such as gold earrings and high-heels. And while most designers have a definite dividing line between clothes for men and women, Westwood simply took her women's clothing, much of which is based on Savile Row tailoring, and re-cut it for men. The result was a disconcerting synthesis of masculine and feminine, historical costume and modern suiting.

Now is the time for Westwood. Milan is full of men dressed in Le Style Anglais - Burberry checks are everywhere. Her collection for next autumn/winter will be a huge hit with the European and Japanese markets.

Westwood's turnover is around £15m and it is hoped that the expansion of her menswear collection will generate another £3m. Tom Logan, buyer for the London store Liberty, is looking forward to selling the collection. "It is wonderful, wearable, tailored clothing - fantastic English dressing," he said after the show.

Learner drivers in rush to beat new test

JOJO MOYES

The Driving Standards Agency is struggling to cope as thousands of learner drivers rush to take their driving test before the introduction of a written section in July.

Applications have increased by 30,000 to 245,000 since this time last year, while problems have increased because of the closure of six of the agency's 11 driving test booking centres and "teething problems" with its telephone booking system.

The increasing waiting lists and last-minute cancellations of the £28.50 test have meant that some learner drivers are threatening to sue the agency.

"The driving test is one of the most nerve-racking times of your life and the new theory test is making it more so," Martin Arnold, head of public affairs at the British School of Motoring, Britain's largest driving school, said. "A number of learner drivers are getting very frustrated with the DSA. They're turning up for tests and finding they've been cancelled. A number have threatened to sue."

Mr Arnold said the agency was meant to be offering driving tests within six weeks, but there was now a three- to four-month wait in some places. "Last year the agency closed 6 of the 11 driving test booking centres. It also introduced a telephone booking system for tests with which they've had a number of teething problems."

The DSA lost its charter mark last year because it could not fulfil its aim of providing a test within six weeks. The problem was exacerbated by a reduction in full-time examiners, which has forced the agency to train 160 part-time replacements. BSM is compiling a national review of the driving test waiting time and will announce the results next month.

A spokeswoman for the DSA said the national average was now seven weeks, caused by a growing number of people applying for licences. She added: "Less than 1 per cent of tests are cancelled at short notice and that's when examiners have gone sick and we're unable to contact the candidate."

She said that of the 350 test centres nationwide, 14 had waiting times longer than 10 weeks. The new two-part driving test is due to be introduced on 1 July. The written section, contracted out to a company called DriveSafe for £70m, is expected to cost the applicant £13-£15 and will have to be taken before the driving test.

There will be 130 theory test centres compared to the 350 driving test centres, a differential that is already causing controversy. Learner drivers on the Isle of Wight, for example, are being told they will have to make a five-mile ferry crossing to Portsmouth for their test.

Queen Mother looks for her Jeeves in Reading dole queue

REBECCA FOWLER

It is a vacancy Jeeves might dream of, but the Queen Mother has chosen a Reading newspaper to advertise for an under butler, because she is anxious to give unemployed men outside London a job opportunity.

The discreet advertisement was placed in the *Reading Evening Post* last Thursday, at the cost of £2.75 a line. It said

simply: "Under Butler required for Royal Household in London. Please apply to the Comptroller, Clarence House."

A spokeswoman for the Queen Mother, whose head butler has served her for 46 years, confirmed her enthusiasm for widening the net.

"That is a policy and has been since unemployment was really bad," the spokeswoman said. For the small but flourishing world of butlers, it is a unique

chance to take one of the most prestigious jobs in the field.

Although the Royal Family often pay less than the average £25,000 salary, and are more traditional than most employers, they also offer the best perks. According to Ivor Spencer, who runs an international butler school and has provided staff for the Duke and Duchess of York, King Hussein of Jordan and Rupert Murdoch, the job will involve serving food, cleaning

silver, opening the door and answering the telephone.

"It's a lovely job. The wages wouldn't be as much as outside, but you wouldn't work as hard, and the perks are marvellous. There's a swimming pool, a football club, and you live in this magnificent place," Mr Spencer said.

The Queen Mother's policy of advertising outside London is shared by Buckingham Palace.

Two young men from Toxteth, Liverpool, who were given scholarships to attend the Spencer course, which costs £3,150, were taken on by Prince Edward and Prince Andrew when they finished.

"When they went to see the manager who was responsible for the positions, he said: 'Don't mess me around' because he didn't realise they were trained."

"But they provided him with their diplomas and were given

the jobs," Mr Spencer said. The single greatest requirement of a royal butler is discretion, and the successful applicant will sign a confidentiality document.

Graduates from the International Butler's School did not even wish to discuss their applications.

Most royal servants either leave within three years, or remain for life, but if the successful applicant does move on

from Clarence House, he can expect an enthusiastic reception from other employers, especially in the United States. The job would also be very different.

Clarence House would not reveal the number of applicants it has received since Thursday.

Reading Job Centre said it did not have any butlers on its books, but it is understood that the advertisement has been taken up enthusiastically.

Spot the ball.

You're not missing anything, it's in the bottom right hand corner of the photograph.

As the law stands you could go outside and play football with a live hedgehog, disembowel a fox or beat a rabbit.

In fact it is rarely a crime to carry out even the most appalling torture as long as your victim is a wild mammal.

But why? There are laws that currently protect the safety of domestic animals. What's needed is a simple law that bans cruelty

to all wild mammals as well.

On January 26th Alan Meale MP will put before Parliament a new Wild Mammals Protection Bill which will do just that.

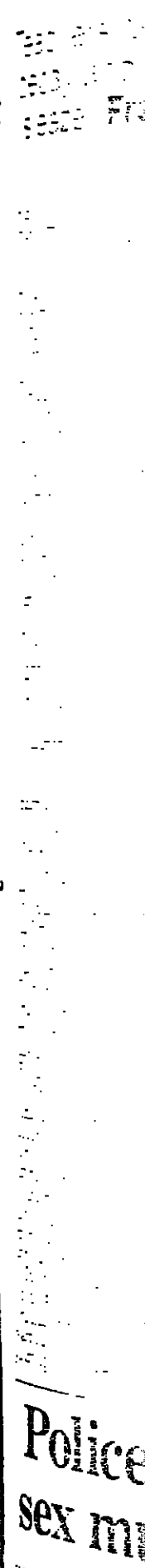
It will make it illegal to cruelly kick, beat, impale, burn, crush or drown a wild mammal.

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Right or wrong: the code of the classroom



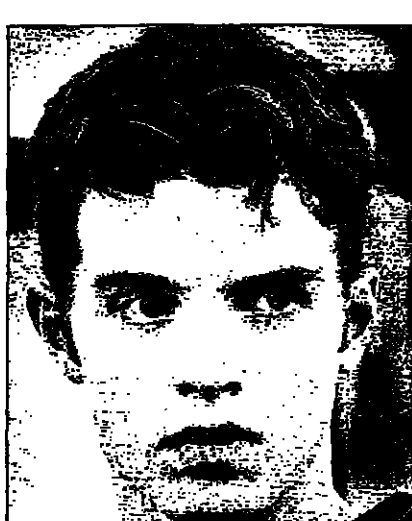
KATE JONES, 14, from Archway: "Our school has a code of conduct. It's a list of rules but of general understandings. The discipline is still there, but there is a looser understanding between the teachers and children. It's about respect, co-operation and self-control. I don't think it's wrong to have underage sex. It's like with drugs, it's a personal decision. It doesn't make any difference whether you are 14 or 17, it's more a question of whether you are ready."



TOM ELLIS, 15, from Tufnell Park: "Our morals are based on having people of different colours and religions in our community. I don't even know the Ten Commandments. My parents are quite liberal and let me be independent. They have never said 'No' to anything really and if they did I'd probably go and do it because they would be stopping me."



ELLEN VELLACOTT, 16, from Highbury: "Lying is ridiculous. Stealing is not justified. And violence doesn't solve anything. If anything, it creates more violence and lies. Under-age sex isn't wrong. It's a matter of whether you are ready for it. Marriage is now too casual a thing. I'll make a commitment, but I personally won't get married."



SIMON REES, 18, from Tufnell Park: "I was both a victim of bullying and a bully myself. I was bullied [and] I went and bullied other people. As a result, I was brought up short by my form teacher. It was really through that that I learned the effects of bullying and how damaging it can be. I think it is unacceptable to remove anybody else's self-esteem or right to feel safe."



DOROTHY LEYS, 12, from Kentish Town: "I think smoking is wrong. But if people just say 'Don't do it' then it's not going to make us do it any less. I'm not really sure about the lottery... It's just taking money from the poor and giving it to the rich. It's just selfish. I think a lot more people would do the lottery if it went to Children in Need or the homeless."



SHAUN NORTON, 14, from Tufnell Park: "I was racist at one time to a few people but through my mum I understood it was wrong. She had another son and he's half-caste. His dad explained to me and taught me about colour. I used to think: 'Ah, right, I'm going to fight you and I'm going to fight you.' But now if trouble comes my way I try and talk my way out of it. You might take a swing at them and think you are right, but actually you are wrong."

Clare Garner interviewed six pupils at Acland Burghley School, a mixed comprehensive in north London

Teachers deny blame for moral decay and put focus on public sleaze. Fran Abrams reports

Teachers reacted angrily last night to a claim by the Government's chief curriculum adviser that they spent too little time teaching children traditional moral values and too much boosting their self-esteem.

They said they were already teaching right and wrong and blamed the national curriculum and public sleaze for stunting children's spiritual development.

Nick Tate, chief executive of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), had told a conference in London that trainee teachers were so worried about being accused of racism or sexism they were unwilling to teach any values.

Dr Tate said the death of Philip Lawrence, the head teacher stabbed to death last month as he tried to protect a pupil, highlighted the need for society to support schools in teaching moral values. The positive message transmitted through team games was marred by parents who stood on the touchline and shouted abuse at the referee, he added.

One teachers' union leader accused Dr Tate of siding with the radical religious right. Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters' Union of Women Teachers, said schools spent so much time teaching morals they were sometimes accused of neglecting the "Three Rs" as a result.

"These moral and religious fanatics forget that morality is caught, not taught. How can schools counteract the devastating examples set by so many of the rich and famous? In reality, they are often oases of morality in a desert of couldn't care less about corruption."

Peter Smith, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, said teachers had warned the Government eight years ago that the national curriculum could squeeze out personal and social education. The Government must get the sleaze out of public life, he added.

"The role model for young people these days is likely to be a football manager involved in shady deals or an MP failing to declare an interest," he said.

Don Foster, the Liberal Democrat education spokesman, said his visits to schools had convinced him that children knew the difference between right and wrong. But they had difficulty in reconciling that with what they saw around them.

"How can it be morally acceptable that so many young people are without jobs and sleeping on the street? The Government must set a far better example itself if it wishes to see improvements in moral standards," he said.

Roy Chapman, the headmaster of Malvern College who created controversy in 1991 when he criticised moral standards in public life, warned that parents bore a greater responsibility than schools for a child's conduct.

"For too many children money and material goods are provided as a substitute for love and interest. The deep-frozen meal eaten in front of the television is no substitute for a family meal when the problems of the world can be taken apart," he said.

Fr Kieran Conry, spokesman for the Roman Catholic church, welcomed Dr Tate's speech. "More and more schools need to support parents if they don't have a moral framework to work within," he said.

Sir Ron Dearing, chairman of SCAA, also supported Dr Tate's view. "The gradual erosion of the Christian religion, the decline of Sunday school as part of a child's Sunday and the values they stood for have... loosened the code that our society is based upon," he said.

Police examine sex murder link

WILL BENNETT

A woman who was sexually assaulted and strangled before her body was left by a moorland road in Lancashire was yesterday identified as Angela Heys, 33, from nearby Bolton.

Lancashire police are liaising with other forces to see whether the death of Miss Heys has similarities to other murders, such as that of Celine Figard, whose naked body was found in a lay-by near Worcester earlier this month after she had been strangled and sexually assaulted.

However, detectives do not believe that Miss Heys was the victim of a serial killer.

A cyclist discovered the body of Miss Heys, who was wearing only a bra and pants, behind a wall off the A666 at Egerton, near Bolton on Sunday morning. Police believe that she had been there for several days.



Celine Figard: Strangled

Miss Heys, the mother of a 15-year-old girl, lived in a bed-sit in a terraced house in Bolton. She had a drink problem, was taking tablets to counteract depression and last year attempted to commit suicide by slashing her wrists after a row with her boyfriend.

John Harrison, a neighbour, said: "She was out of work and very depressed. She couldn't work because she had a bad leg from a car accident years ago. As well as pursuing a link to the Celine Figard murder, Lancashire police are liaising with Greater Manchester police who are investigating the murders of Louise Sellars, a schoolgirl from Wigan, and Maria Requeña, a Manchester prostitute. They are also contacting Merseyside officers looking for the murderer of Julie Finley, 23, whose naked body was found at Rainford, near Skelmersdale.

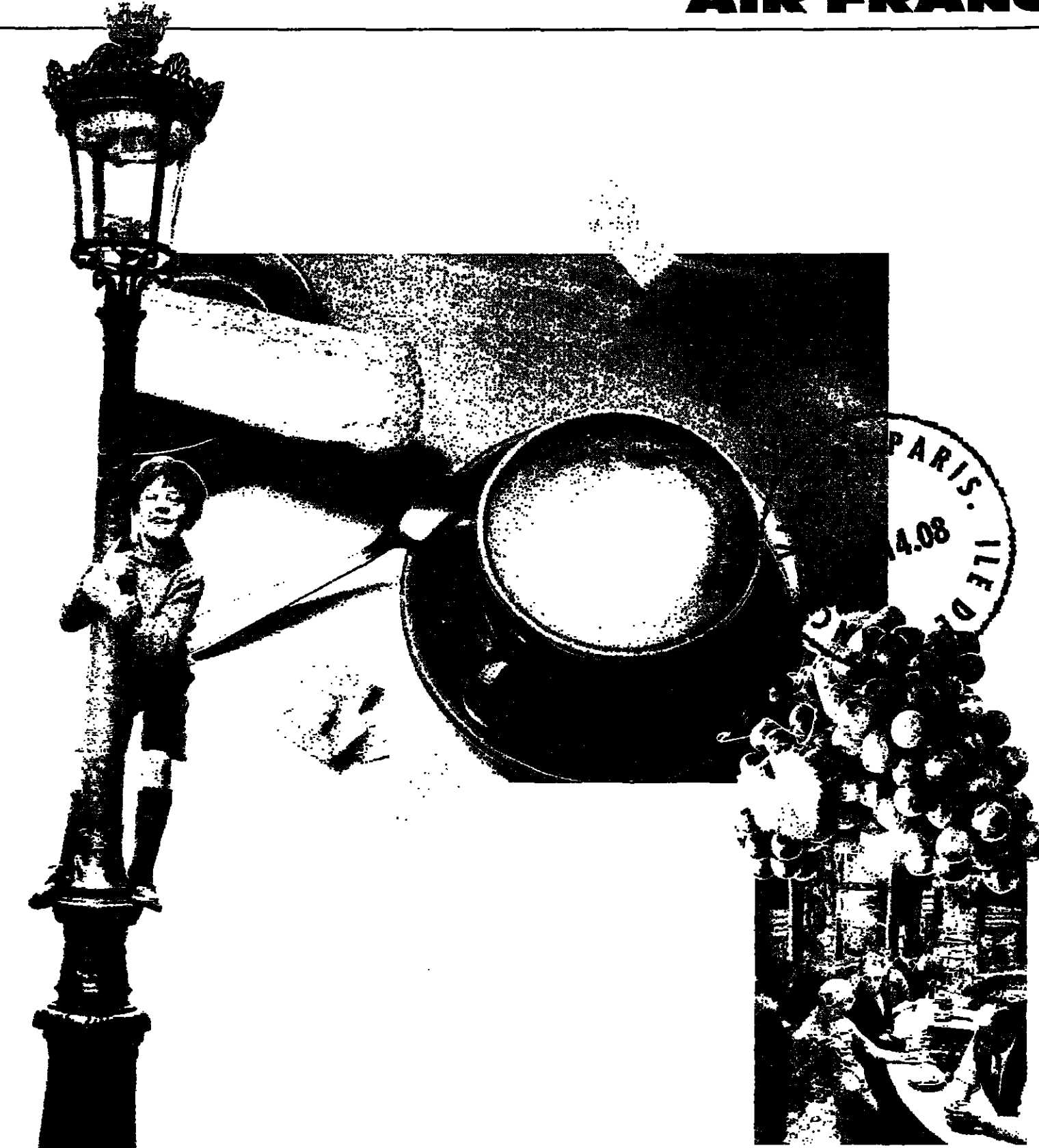
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politics

Ex-minister issues challenge in Finance Bill debate

Hunt rallies defence of One Nation ideal

A passionate defence of One Nation Toryism was mounted by the former Cabinet minister David Hunt.

In a clear response to Baroness Thatcher's right-wing rallying call of last week, Mr Hunt urged the party not to be side-tracked by "siren voices" but to remain true to One Nation policies.

The former Secretary of State for Wales emphasised the need to ensure that unemployment did not undermine the social fabric of Britain and urged Tory colleagues to be more positive about the European Union.

Making his speech during the Second Reading debate on the Finance Bill, Mr Hunt drew particular attention to the One Nation leanings of Chancellor Kenneth Clarke who was listening on the front bench.

Congratulating Mr Clarke on a "One Nation Budget", he said: "I recall on a previous occasion the Chancellor said that one of his clear objectives was to ensure we don't have developing within the United Kingdom the sort of underclass that we have seen in the United States."

The Budget, and the Finance Bill which implements it, did much to ensure that would not happen, Mr Hunt said. Another Tory backbencher, Tim Yeo, also praised the "One Nation

Budget", though it was a description that did not seem to have occurred to William Waldegrave, the Chief Secretary, who opened the debate.

Mr Hunt recalled the seminal One Nation pamphlet published in the 1950s by a group including Edward Heath, Iain Macleod, Enoch Powell and Angus Maude and quoted Disraeli's abhorrence of two na-

problems which provides the answer.

"The Chancellor has clearly defined the social mind. Of course we must allow the market to produce the wealth, but so that we can then afford the social policies that enable us fundamentally to ensure that we are one nation."

Mr Hunt said the centre ground was the territory where the Tories had won successive elections under Lady Thatcher and John Major.

"We must never surrender our election-winning strategy. Siren voices from the extreme left, and indeed from the right, may urge us to side track, to move away from One Nation policies, but we must remain true to our long-standing beliefs."

Mr Yeo, a former housing minister, said Mr Hunt had given "an excellent and clear and very timely reminder" of the true nature of One Nation Conservatism.

That strand of the party, Mr Yeo said, "quite wrongly is now being characterised as some kind of excessively pro-European, excessively left-wing body of philosophy. It has nothing whatever to do with that."

Lady Thatcher, reasserting her right-wing, Euro-sceptic creed last Thursday, dismissed those she once branded wets as Euro-federalists who wanted "no-nation Conservatism".

Inside Parliament

Stephen Goodwin

tions - "rich and poor" - in ignorance of each other. "That has been very much the theme running through my strong belief in Conservatism and Christian democracy. One Nation Toryism isn't the possession of the left, the centre or the right. It is fundamental to Conservatism."

Mr Hunt said that, coming from Wirral on Merseyside, he cared very much about unemployment for far too long. "That has done a great deal to undermine the social fabric of society. It is the Tory approach to these



Political overture: David Clelland, Labour MP for Newcastle Tyne Bridge and a keen guitarist, was one of the first musicians yesterday to take advantage of Tyneside Metro's newly-licensed busking Photograph: Will Walker

Threat to Major could be blocked by MPs

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

Rule changes which could make it impossible for John Major to be challenged again as Tory leader are to be examined by leading backbenchers. But there are sharp differences within the party over whether such changes are desirable.

Sir Marcus Fox, chairman of the 1922 committee, confirmed yesterday it was planning to re-examine the rules. A small sub-committee of senior officials of the committee is expected to be set up shortly to examine the procedures for electing party leaders.

But as Sir Marcus warned in a BBC Radio interview yesterday that the committee would not reach a hasty decision, it became clear that, while the committee executive is divided over whether a further change in the rules is desirable.

At least one member of the executive is expected to argue that the present system, under which a leader can be challenged from within his own party whether or not he is an elected Prime Minister, should be radically reformed. But other members of the committee, particularly on the party's right wing, are highly sceptical of the desirability of a rule change which they believe could simply be a manoeuvre to eliminate any possibility of an 11th-hour challenge to Mr Major before the general election.

Sir Marcus acknowledged that a further challenge in 1996 was theoretically possible, but said he was sure one would not take place because it would be "ludicrous" for the party to split in the run-up to a general election. He said: "There is a case about whether it is right that when we are in government, we should have a challenge every year to the Prime Minister when he is in office."

"The feeling is among some that it's quite different when you are in opposition. But in government, it's confusing, to put it mildly, and debilitating [to have a leadership contest]."

Sir Marcus has been briefed by his predecessor Sir Cranley Onslow on the issues examined by the 1922 Committee executive when it changed the rules for leadership contests after the fall of Lady Thatcher in November 1990. At present, 10 per cent of the parliamentary party have to notify the 1922 chairman that they want a contest.

The insistence of Sir Marcus and at least one senior colleague that the examination would not be hurried, makes it possible the rules could remain intact until after the election.

Lib Dems in drive to spread the word

Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, will next month embark on a round-Britain tour in a bid to raise his party's profile in the run-up to the next election, writes Patricia Wynn Davies.

The visits to 12 Liberal Democrat target areas, including the West Country, Liverpool, Sheffield, Tyneside and Edinburgh, follow private polling in

the regions showing government popularity at rock bottom.

But the research also showed that while people felt betrayed and let down, they also felt nervous about change.

Mr Ashdown will use the inaugural Liberal Democrat News lecture next Monday to issue a rallying call for pluralism, arguing that the Opposition has a responsibility not only to

bring about the defeat of a discredited government, but to build "consensus" about the nature of the alternative and ensure it is long lasting.

It will be the second time Mr Ashdown has taken his cause away from Westminster to the country. But this year's series of meetings and discussions, under the rubric "Britain's people: Britain's future" and planned to

run until the autumn, are intended to be far more in-depth than the 1993 tour resulting in the book *Beyond Westminster*.

The Labour leader, Tony Blair, is conducting a similar exercise. The party hopes to attract 1,200 people to a meeting in Derby on Thursday. A business breakfast in the east Midlands is planned for Friday, followed by a meeting with parents.

Scotland hosts question time

JOHN ARLIDGE
Scotland Correspondent

Michael Forsyth, the Secretary of State for Scotland, yesterday unveiled his vision of "limited, sensible" devolution in the heart of Labour's proposed Scottish parliament.

Mr Forsyth chose New Parliament House, in Edinburgh, the building Tony Blair has earmarked for a Scottish assembly, as the venue for the first-ever Scottish Question Time to be held outside Westminster. In the chamber Mr Forsyth answered opposition questions at a meeting of the Commons Grand Committee of Scottish MPs.

The move is part of Mr Forsyth's policy of increasing the powers of the committee. Two months ago he gave its members the right to conduct the second and third readings of uncontested Bills and to summon senior ministers to face questions on government policy. Mr Forsyth hopes the beefed-

up committee, plus the recent transfer of powers from the Scottish Office to Scotland's 29 new unitary local authorities, will blunt Labour's arguments for a tax-raising Edinburgh assembly. John Major and Kenneth Clarke will appear before the committee this spring.

The public gallery yesterday heard Mr Forsyth fend off Labour and nationalist claims that he had turned a blind eye to the problems caused by the Christmas blizzards. He agreed with Labour members that "idiotic" attempts by the Tory backbencher John Butterfill to introduce Central European Time in the UK should be defeated. And he announced his intention to launch a "crusade" against drug abuse.

While the Tory, SNP and Liberal Democrat benches were full, less than half Scotland's 49 Labour MPs attended the session, in a chamber where many will be expected to sit if Labour wins the next general election.

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Photograph: Tony Buckingham

DAVID KEYS
Archaeology Correspondent

If the archaeologists are right, then – outside the Holy Land – it is one of the oldest synagogues ever found.

place where the Torah scrolls (the first five books of the bible) would have been kept. A silver coin was found there along with scorch

ed on trumped up charges of clipping silver off coins. Around 5000 were hanged and the others expelled in 1290.

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

It was found that one in eight 13-year-olds had taken drugs, 15 per cent of 14-year-olds and nearly 40 per cent of 15-year-olds. The most com-

■ **Drugs and Crime.** Centre for the Study of Public Order. Leicester University. £8.50.

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news

Out of care **Out of mind?**

Psychiatric beds under siege from all sides

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

In a small office in the Gordon psychiatric hospital, in central London, sits Alistair Robinson, 31, a registered mental nurse and, since last May, the hospital's bed manager.

It is almost impossible to talk to him. In the space of 20 minutes his bleep goes off seven times, the phone rings five times and he makes six calls out. He is trying to find beds for psychiatric patients who need hospital admission. What is it like? "Horrendous," he grins, sitting beneath a cartoon of an NHS psychiatrist addressing a plant in a flowerbed and telling it: "We need your bed."

On his desk is a directory of NHS and private psychiatric hospitals from the south coast to Glasgow, including 37 secure units where patients who are an active danger to others can be housed. He spent the morning trying to find such a bed for a man the police had arrested but whom his unit's court diversion team had decided was mental-

As the mentally ill are diverted from prison to hospital, long-stay beds continue to close, and the health service finds its wards 'caught in a vice', London psychiatric hospitals struggle with six patients for every five vacancies

ly ill and should be cared for in hospital, not prison. "I phoned about 25 of them. Today I didn't quite get to there" - he jabs his finger at the line which says Rainhill Hospital, Preston.

He failed. By 2pm he had been unable to find an empty secure bed anywhere from London and the south coast up to Norwich and Cambridge. Time had run out. "At two o'clock he was up before the judge who remanded him to Brixton for a month. That means we've got a month to find him a bed, or we're up before the beak."

Mr Robinson is also trying to find general psychiatric beds for four patients whom the unit's community psychiatric team say need admission.

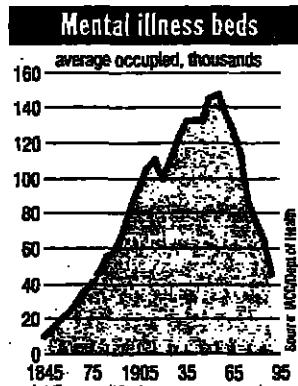
The Gordon itself is full - running in fact at 105 per cent occupancy, which means that where a patient is out on leave, another is filling the bed: not good if the trial visit to the outside world breaks down and the patient needs to come back. The Gordon's sister units too are full. "They've been ringing me to ask for beds". In the end, beds are found, one in a private clinic for which the NHS will pay, another where the parents can afford the £3,000 deposit needed for their son to receive private treatment. "That's rare. But it does happen."

Not every day is like this one. But the Gordon is far from unique. Repeated surveys of all 12 of London's mental illness services over the past 18 months by the Royal College of Psychiatrists show bed occupancy running at 120 per cent. Particularly for secure accommodation, patients have to be



Cold comfort: A patient waits in a corridor at the oversubscribed Gordon Psychiatric Hospital, central London

Photograph: Glyn Griffiths



shipped out to private hospitals in Northampton, Yorkshire and Wales - 200 miles away in some cases - a process that can only disrupt care for people who are already seriously disturbed. In the week before the last survey in July there were 93 assaults on patients or staff, a further 29 which produced minor injury, and two which involved fractures, large lacerations or other serious injury.

According to the Mental Health Act Commission, the statutory watchdog for patients compulsorily detained under the Act, this situation is no longer confined to the big cities. "Occupancy levels of 100 per cent and above have been reported from areas of Devon, East Anglia and Cheshire, as

well as all the main conurbation areas," it says.

The acute, short-term admission wards are caught in a vice, according to mental health managers and doctors. "Entirely admirable schemes to divert the mentally ill from prison to hospital have increased the load at the same time as the old long-stay beds have continued to close," said Chris Hegginbotham, a former national director of Mind who is the chief executive for the service which covers the Gordon.

"At the same time unemployment and homelessness have increased pressure from the other end." The result is a service, in the Mental Health Act Commission's words, often "stretched beyond capacity".

The simple facts on 'split brain' disorder

Q What is schizophrenia?

A It is a general term for a group of psychotic illnesses - the most common form of psychotic disorder - characterised by disturbed thinking, emotional reactions, and behaviours. The word means "split brain" to describe how the sufferer's thoughts and feelings may not relate to each other in a logical fashion. Often the disorder is described as having a "split personality" but this has led to it being confused with multiple personality disorder, a quite distinct condition.

Q What is the cause? Is there a genetic component?

A What is happening in the brain of a schizophrenic is not fully understood. However, the drugs which are beneficial in controlling symptoms work on certain chemical messengers. These chemicals, such as dopamine and serotonin, enable brain cells to communicate with each other. Scientists conclude that an imbalance of neurotransmitters is probably the root cause. There is a strong genetic factor but it cannot explain all cases. First-degree relatives of schizo-

Liz Hunt answers some of the questions most frequently asked about schizophrenia

phrenics (parents, children or siblings) have a 10 per cent chance of developing the illness. The identical twin of a schizophrenic has a one in two chance of developing schizophrenia.

Q Is schizophrenia a disease or has it always existed? Is the incidence increasing?

A Although schizophrenia has been studied properly only in the last 100 years, the symptoms are described in the earliest medical texts. Its prevalence is remarkably consistent throughout the world, at 1 in 100 of the population. However, it is possibly more common in some geographical areas than others and certainly in inner cities, where poor living standards, lack of access to medical care, and other deprivation, may act as a trigger. A disproportionate number of people of Afro-Caribbean extraction in Britain suffer from schizophrenia. There are an estimated 250,000 people diagnosed with schizophrenia in the United Kingdom. The age of onset is between 15 and 30.

Q Can people grow out of it?

A A proportion of sufferers, possibly up to 30 per cent, suffer one acute episode and then get better. Another, smaller group may have three or four episodes and then recover. Often these episodes are linked to drug taking and some researchers insist that this group does not have schizophrenia at all, just symptoms similar to it triggered by certain drugs. But essentially, schizophrenia is a disabling and prolonged illness.

Q Is there a cure? What can doctors do?

A There is no cure. About 10 per cent of sufferers are severely impaired for life by the disorder. Up to 30 per cent will resume normal lives while the majority have varying degrees of independence during the course of their illness. Doctors rely on anti-psychotic drugs which reduce the symptoms and may make some patients more receptive to psychotherapy.

Worried parents' pleas for help ignored

NICHOLAS TIMMINS

"He is worried about his son Simon. He fears his son may suffer the same fate as Martin Murrell. I am frightened for myself," he says.

Marjorie Wallace, chief executive of Sane, is reading from the log of calls to the schizophrenia charity's helpline in the week after Martin Murrell, a paranoid schizophrenic, was sentenced for stabbing his stepfather 18 times in the back, eye, face and genitals before turning on his mother and almost killing her too.

"He hears voices. About half the time he is fine, but at others he is violent. He comes round for a meal every day but becomes abusive and threatening, telling his father to get out of the house because it is his. It was after a meal with his parents that Murrell turned on them, because, he later told police, he was overcome by "a strange fear" and believed they were looking at him oddly.

Simon is 31, a schizophrenic who became ill 18 months after his mother died when he was 16. He was discharged from hospital two years ago to a supported group home, but left after a year. "He won't talk to his social worker. He won't take his medicine. He won't go to the doctor or the day centre. He approaches strangers in the street, asking for money and gets abusive if refused. His father doesn't know what to do.

"Then there's Christine, from Wales - I'm changing the names and locations, the calls are confidential - her son lives with her. He's schizophrenic. He is becoming more violent. He recently attacked a neighbour. But they won't admit him to hospital. Whenever he's assessed, he has been calm. His mother says she can no longer trust anyone to believe how bad he can get."

The list goes on, drawn from the 1,000 calls a week that Sane receives. "There are families out there just not getting any help," Ms Wallace said.

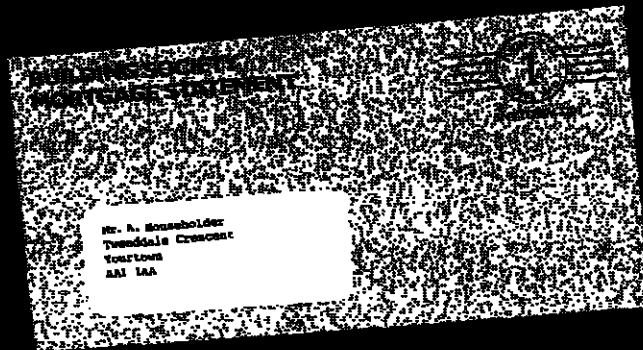
She has campaigned for 10 years for better services for schizophrenics. She is not opposed to care in the community. "There are places where it works well. There are people for whom it can work," she says. "But it is so clearly not working for some of the most seriously mentally ill. Their numbers may be small, but some people do need haven or asylum care."

Her prescription is a moratorium on long-term care bed closures, a building programme to provide new acute beds and the introduction of more 24-hour staffed hostels - a policy the Department of Health has advocated since 1991 but on which, according to the Mental Health Act Commission, progress has been slow.

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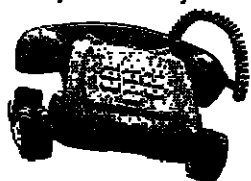
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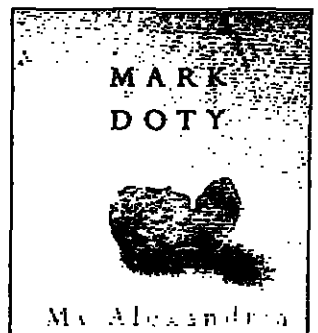
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Sorrow of Aids inspires poet to TS Eliot award

CLARE GARNER

The winner of the TS Eliot Prize was announced last night as Mark Doty, an American who picked up the prestigious award for the first collection of his poetry to be published in the UK. The £5,000 prize was presented by Eliot's widow, Valerie, at the Polish Hearth Club, in west London, for *My Alexandria* (published by Cape), which includes poems inspired by Mr Doty's experience of his partner living with HIV and Aids. First published in the United States, the collection has already won the Los Angeles Times Book Award and the National Book Critics Award.

Liz Lochhead, a poet, performer, playwright and broadcaster, joined James Fenton, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and Maura Dooly, former literature officer at the South Bank Centre, on the panel of judges. Ms Lochhead said: "Mark Doty's outstanding *My Alexandria* has been justly lauded in his native America and burst upon Britain this year with the force that such rage, beauty and sorrow must summon... These are made deeply personal and poignant for Mr Doty. His long-term partner was



Winner: Mark Doty's book

diagnosed as HIV-positive in 1989 and these poems are, he says, written in the strange and anxious period between the onset of Aids. It's not the shadow we remember from his poetry, but froths of flowers, rainstreaks, rusts...

The prize - awarded for the best collection of poetry published in the UK and Republic of Ireland - was inaugurated by the Poetry Book Society in 1993 to celebrate its 40th anniversary and honour the poet.

Mr Doty, who lives in Massachusetts, has written two previous books of poetry, *Beilkehem in Broad Daylight* and *Turtle, Swan*.

DAILY POEM

NO (from *My Alexandria*)

By Mark Doty (winner of the TS Eliot Prize)

The children have brought their wood turtle into the dining hall because they want us to feel

the power they have when they hold a house in their hands, want us to feel

alien lacquer and the little thrill that he might, like God, show his face. He's the colour of ruined wallpaper,

of cognac, and he's closed, pulled in as though he'll never come out; nothing shows but the plummy leather

of the legs, his claws resembling clusters of diminutive raspberries. They know he makes night

anytime he wants, so perhaps he feels at the center of everything, as they do. His age,

greater than that of anyone around the table, is a room from which they are excluded,

though they don't mind, since they can carry this perfect feeling anywhere. They love

that he might poke out his old, old face, but doesn't. I think the children smell unopened,

like unlit candles, as they lift him around the table, praise his secrecy, holding to each adult face

his prayer, the single word of the shell, which is no.

Hostage crisis: Hardliners increase their influence over Russian President as Chechen rebels deny killing any captives

Tough-talking Yeltsin gambles his future

HELEN WOMACK
Moscow

Declaring that "terrorism cannot be tolerated in any civilised state", President Boris Yeltsin yesterday justified his decision to send heavily-armed Kremlin troops into the southern Russian village of Pervomayskoye against Chechen rebels who have been holding about 100 hostages for nearly a week.

The soldiers, backed by helicopter gunships, began storming the village in the morning and Mr Yeltsin promised they would quickly finish their mission, causing little bloodshed. But, as darkness fell, the army still had to clear Pervomayskoye of scores more gunmen loyal to the Chechen leader, General Dzhokhar Dudayev, and the fate of the remaining hostages was unknown.

The Interior Ministry said last



Raduyev: Militant leader

night its forces had nearly completed the military operation. There was no mention of casualties or of freed hostages.

"One can say that in Pervomayskoye, federal forces are conducting an operation to free the village from a well-armed combat unit whose capabilities are similar to those of a battalion," admitted a spokesman for the Federal Security Service (FSB - formerly the KGB).

The man leading the Russians in battle, the FSB chief Mikhail Barsukov, said he had given the order to attack after the rebels, belonging to a group calling themselves the Lone Wolves, had started shooting hostages on Sunday. But in a radio broadcast to the Chechen capital, Grozny, the leader of the militants, Salman Raduyev, denied this. "Not a single hostage was killed yesterday or today and we have no intention

of killing them," he said.

He also denied a report from the Interior Ministry of Dagestan, the region where Pervomayskoye is situated on the border with Chechnya, that Dagestani elders who came to negotiate with him yesterday morning had been murdered. "No one came for talks with me in the morning and the federal troops were the first to open fire."

The Russian commandos were charged with the delicate task of saving as many of the hostages as possible. But Mr Yeltsin, mindful that he cannot afford a weak image with presidential elections only five months away, also demanded that the terrorists be punished.

"Dudayev himself said everything was being done on his instructions. He has exposed himself as a bandit, the very chief terrorist," said the President, suggesting that Russia is likely to return to the war in Chechnya itself with a vengeance.

The human rights campaigner Sergei Kovalev, nominated for the Nobel Peace prize for his opposition to the war in Chechnya, lamented the assault on Pervomayskoye. "The so-called operation to free the hostages is developing with great probability into an operation to wipe out the hostages," he said on Ekho Moskvy radio. "It is all the same for those unfortunate who is going to kill them - terrorists, artillerymen, pilots or special police."

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the French government also expressed concern. But Mr Yeltsin, whose administration allowed Chechen rebels to escape after a similar hostage drama in Budennovsk, southern Russia, last June, is determined to be tougher this time. Evidently he is once again coming under the influence of hardliners who persuaded him in December 1994 to try and crush the Chechen independence drive with a military intervention.

While the Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, the dove who negotiated the end of the Budennovsk crisis, was out of action with a "cold" yesterday, Mr Yeltsin held talks with his hawkish Defence Minister, Pavel Grachev.

But the appointment yesterday of Nikolai Yegorov to replace the liberal Sergei Filatov



Under fire: Russian troops aim their guns (above) at Pervomayskoye, backed by helicopter gunships (right). President Yeltsin (below) promised the onslaught would be over quickly and cause little bloodshed



as head of Mr Yeltsin's personal

administration marked an advance for the hardliners. Mr Yegorov, who helped to launch the 1994 crackdown against the Chechens, will join the FSB chief, Mr Barsukov, and the President's personal bodyguard, Alexander Korzhakov, in the coterie around Mr Yeltsin.

How ever the Pervomayskoye drama ends the damage to Mr Yeltsin is already done. Igor Serebryany, a local politician in Moscow, described

the crisis as a "political Chernobyl" for him.

Today, when the new Duma convenes, there will be uproar from those accusing the President of being too feeble, those accusing him of being too brutal and those blaming him for dragging Russia into the Chechen war in the first place. The liberal Yabloko grouping has already declared its intention to call for a vote of no-confidence in the government.

Bloody drama, page 15



Bosnian PoW exchange runs into trouble

EMMA DALY
Bocac

True to its word, the Bosnian government yesterday refused to release more than 200 Serb prisoners of war, scuppering the planned release of more than 900 people across five front-line check-points. The authorities in Sarajevo had refused last week to endorse a Red Cross plan for a comprehensive prisoner release until the Bosnian Serbs accounted for more than 24,000 people reported missing, of whom 4,000 are believed to have been imprisoned.

All but three of the 210 Serb prisoners bused by the Bosnian Croats about 120 miles from Mostar to the Black Dog check-point, south of the Serb citadel of Banja Luka, were sent back after the Serbs failed to produce any of their detainees. The three exceptions were allowed to cross to Serb-held territory.

Under the Dayton peace plan, the parties are supposed to release all their prisoners by midnight on Friday. But the Muslim-led Bosnian government insists that the issue must be linked to the fate of missing persons, including thousands who disappeared in July after the fall of the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia, and who are alleged to have been murdered and buried in mass graves.

"They said this plan should include all their allegations about prisoners they think the Bosnian Serbs have, and that includes 3,000 people they think were arrested during the fall of Srebrenica," said Christophe Girod, the Red Cross delegate in charge at Bocac, where more than 400 prisoners were to have been set free.

Red Cross officials say they may only act on the list of prisoners submitted by the parties, and that the fate of those who have disappeared is a separate issue. "We are keeping pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to get an answer [about those missing from Srebrenica]," Mr Girod said. "We have big fears about where they are."

If the deadline passes without the prisoners being freed,

the Red Cross will hand the issue over to Admiral Leighton Smith, commander of Nato's Implementation Force (I-Fo), who must judge whether the parties are complying with Dayton, and if not, what sanctions should be applied.

Nine prisoners were freed yesterday by the Bosnian Croats, including three Serbs in Mostar and three Muslims in Orasje, on the border with Croatia. But the planned release of one Muslim and six Serbs in Gorazde and 80 Serb PoWs near Sanski Most was abandoned yesterday.

It was to have been the final prisoner release of the war. So far, more than 17,000 detainees have been exchanged since 1992. The Red Cross delegation at Bocac tried to broker a bilateral release between the Bosnian Croats and Serbs, but although the latter sent empty coaches to Black Dog to collect any freed Serbs, they failed to deliver any prisoners.

Two members of the Serb prisoner-exchange committee eventually arrived at the check-point. But they said they were only willing to release 16 prisoners, when at least 31 were expected.

Mr Girod admitted defeat. "I'm quite disappointed, but not as much as the prisoners," he said, referring to the Serbs who had travelled from Mostar. "You can imagine their mood."

He added, "To bring 210 prisoners up to a crossing point and then bring them back is a bit outrageous."

He was annoyed with both sides and warned that the planned exchange today of 360 prisoners at Sarajevo airport looks unlikely to proceed. "Let's be realistic," he said. "It will probably not go ahead."

■ New York — The UN Security Council was set last night to create a new force of up to 5,000 troops, backed by Nato air power, for the last Serb-held region of Croatia. The council was expected to vote to establish a military and civilian mission to Eastern Slavonia, a sliver of Croatian territory containing some oil which borders Serb-dominated Yugoslavia.

IN BRIEF

King of Lesotho killed in car accident

Maseru — King Moshoeshoe II of Lesotho, 57, was killed in a car accident, less than two years after regaining the throne of the southern African nation. He had travelled to rural Lesotho to inspect his cattle and was returning to Maseru, the capital, when the accident occurred, the South African ambassador, Gerhard Visser, said. The car left the road, overturned and rolled down an embankment, killing the King and his driver. No other cars were involved. He had been on and off the throne three times in the waves of political unrest that have swept Lesotho since independence from Britain in 1966. He was stripped of all political powers after his last ousting, by military leaders in 1989, and only returned to the symbolic monarchy last year following a coup led by his son and successor, the former King Letsie III. AP

Obituary, page 12

Jungle rebels free German hostage

Jakarta — Separatist rebels freed a German hostage, Frank Mombert, of the World Wide Fund for Nature, to mediate with the Indonesian government for the lives of 14 other captives they are holding in the jungle of Irian Jaya province. British detectives are in the region to help in the search for the hostages — four Britons, two Dutch and eight Indonesians — AP

Israeli President praises anti-Nazis

Berlin — The Israeli President, Ezer Weizman, met members of the wartime German resistance and paid homage to those who gave their lives opposing Hitler. On the second day of his state visit, Mr Weizman laid a wreath at the Plötzensee prison in Berlin where the Nazis executed 2,500 resistance fighters from Germany and abroad between 1933 and 1945. AP



Gorbachev hint

Paris — The former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev (left) says the more he thinks about it, the more he is likely to run in Russia's June presidential election. "It is an issue I examine all the time. I think about it all the time and I am leaning increasingly towards a positive decision," Mr Gorbachev told a French television interviewer in Moscow. AP

Nigerian opposition thwarts riot police

Lagos — Nigerian opposition groups thwarted riot police who took over the venue for a service to honour victims of military rule, and met elsewhere. Witnesses said 100 police took over the Shitta area of Lagos, the scheduled place for the multi-religious service, after the event was declared illegal. "We saw Shitta swamped by the police [and] the army and, following prior arrangements, we moved to another area, where we conducted a Christian and a Muslim service," Tunji Adebisi, of the opposition National Democratic Coalition, said. Reuters

Former guerrillas 'deny role of women'

Harare — Police who seized all copies of a film on women fighters against white rule in the former Rhodesia were carrying out the wishes of male guerrillas uncomfortable with any portrayal of the women's role, the film-makers said. They accused male fighters who complained to police about alleged obscenities in the film *Flame* of trying to prevent any negative images of the bush war appearing. Police seized clips and negatives of the feature film from the independent Black and White Film Company here on Friday, halting editing on the production, funded by the European Commission, France and Zimbabwean investors. The film focuses on two 15-year-old black girls who suffer sexual exploitation, starvation and brutality at the hands of guerrilla superiors before going on to fight valiantly against white troops. AP

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obituaries/gazette

King Moshoeshoe II of Lesotho

Moshoeshoe II of Lesotho was an ill-starred king. His reign began in subservience – his country was ruled by Britain – and it ended when his authority among his own people was uncertain. He was buffeted over the years by the struggles for power in Lesotho, and for much of the time he was forced to bend the knee to political overlords. He was twice sent into exile and once deposed. From beginning to end his life reflected the unceasing conflicts among the fewer than 2 million Basotho whose mountain country is entirely surrounded by South Africa.

Constantine Bereng Seeiso, born in 1938, was the descendant and bore the name of Moshoeshoe, the 19th-century warrior who founded the Basotho nation. He became king when Lesotho's independence was restored in 1966. He studied at Roma College in Lesotho, but amid anxiety that his stepfather was seeking to poison him was sent to Ampleforth College in Britain and went on to Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Spending holidays with a landed family in the west of England he took to fishing, shooting and riding to hounds.

He turned 21 while still engaged with his PPE degree at Oxford, and wrote to the Regent in Lesotho to note that he wanted to assume his rightful title at home. That he did, and led the Basotho to independence. But he was soon tussling with the elected prime minister,



A king engaged in the pursuit of democracy: Moshoeshoe (right) greeting President Nelson Mandela of South Africa on an official visit to Lesotho last July. Moshoeshoe died in a car accident yesterday

Leabua Jonathan, for greater executive power. Jonathan accused him of conspiring with the opposition to bring down the government and temporarily placed him under house arrest. That was but a curtain-raiser to Jonathan's seizing power in 1970. Moshoeshoe was sent into exile in Holland for eight months and allowed to return only on condition that he kept out of politics.

The next 20 years of Jonathan's autocratic rule left

Moshoeshoe kicking his heels on the sidelines, a figurehead king despite his undoubted popularity. His elegance and his natural courtesy were no match for Jonathan's williness. He could do little but indicate his criticisms of the government. Nor did his position ease after a military coup in 1990. For he was again in conflict over the extent of his power and was sent into exile in Britain. He was deposed and his eldest son was put on the throne as Letsie III.

Landlocked Lesotho is totally vulnerable to South Africa: its economic existence is dependent on its neighbour through export of workers, especially for gold-mining. They remit US\$500m each year, accounting for nearly half of Lesotho's gross national product. South African interference originally helped to bring Jonathan to power and kept him there, and then brought him down when he became over-critical of the apartheid across the border.

The changes of the 1990s in South Africa in their turn served to return Moshoeshoe to Lesotho and to the throne; in search of stability, regional leaders led by President Nelson Mandela negotiated restoration of constitutional rule. In January last year, Letsie fully yielded the throne to Moshoeshoe.

But Moshoeshoe still had an uneasy passage in defining his powers in relation to the current government of Prime Minister

Nso Mosehle – who, paradoxically, although left-wing and nationalist, owes his place in Lesotho to help from the South Africa of apartheid times. Moshoeshoe's sudden death yesterday, reportedly in a car accident while travelling from his royal village to the capital, Maseru, interrupts that evolution, and leaves question-marks over the role of the king.

I first met Moshoeshoe when Britain was the colonial power and he had the title of Para-

mount Chief. As a reporter with the then *Rand Daily Mail* in Johannesburg I was granted an interview but a Colonial Office official warned me that under no circumstances was I to address him as "Your Majesty". Britain had the Queen and no competitor was to be allowed, it seemed. Whitehall had coined some other Sesotho term for him, which was supposed to convey the idea of majesty without actually saying it. But I knew that Moshoeshoe was venerated

as king by the Basotho. So throughout the opportunity seized every opportunity to use "Your Majesty". Each time, out of the corner of my eye, I saw the official who was sitting in on the interview go red in the face.

Some 30 years later, while Moshoeshoe was still in exile, he invited me to a weekend conference of interested people held outside London to create an Institute for Democracy in Africa. The institute was innovative and significant: it was one of the early statements by African leaders that it was primarily up to Africa to rescue itself from its troubles and that fostering democracy was the first step. There was a certain piquancy in having a king engaged in the pursuit of democracy.

Apart from the serious discussions of the conference, I had pleasure in sitting down to breakfast each morning next to Moshoeshoe and saying "Good morning, Your Majesty".

Benjamin Pogrund

Constantine Bereng Seeiso: born 2 May 1938; Paramount Chief of Basutoland, 1960-66; crowned 1966 King Moshoeshoe II of Lesotho; exiled from Lesotho 1970; stripped of constitutional powers February 1990; deposed November 1990; in exile in the UK 1990-92; reinstated as King January 1993; married 1962 Princess Tabane Maseru (two sons, one daughter); died 15 January 1996.

Richard Cobb



Cobb: an example of the scholarly life and a lord of misrule

The magic of Richard Cobb's style, combined with an incomparable sense of place and interest in human nature, made him a genius among post-war British historians.

Cobb acquired the love of France and of shocking which were to dominate his life while staying with an irreverent family in Paris in the 1930s. Research into the most extreme of French revolutionaries, the Hébertistes, was interrupted by wartime service in the British army which, for Cobb, included cleaning latrines, trying to learn Polish, serving with the Czechoslovak Independent Brigade Group and writing for *La Renaissance du Bassin*. After a year in Brussels, one of his favourite cities (first visited to avoid appearing as a witness in a murder trial), he lived in Paris from 1946 to 1955, doing research in the archives, teaching English, and writing.

He had many friends in the French Communist Party and, in part because they had provided him with frequent hot meals, he went at the death of Stalin. He was exuberant and unconventional. At one of the night-clubs he frequented, he met ex-King Farouk, with whom he shared the same birth-date. They occasionally drank together, and 40 years later Cobb was one of the few people to remember that, in the Fourth Republic, *un farouk* was a name for a 10,000-franc note. He once greeted the dawn note, in the company of a dozen similarly unimpaired men and women, in the fountains of the Place de la Concorde.

While living in Paris he acquired the knowledge of France which made him the poet of the *vespasienne* and the *filie marmite*, of bourgeois ladies of Roubaix and the museum of crime at Lyon. Essentially English, he loved France so much that he believed that to live there was to live doubly and several times applied for naturalisation.

"After 1958, as far as I was concerned, nothing could ever be quite the same again," He

disapproved of military coups and compared Paris under the Fifth Republic to Warsaw after the 1944 rising, so great was the scale of destruction of the old buildings and streets he loved so ardently. He had, however, already made a break with France by accepting a teaching position at Aberystwyth in 1955. In 1961 he obtained a post at Oxford. His style of teaching, talking, drinking, and after-dinner behaviour – chariot racing in Balliol senior common room was the least of his exploits – made this shy, often uneasy man a living legend. Cobb was thin, looked like a cross between Voltaire and George VI, and was once described by a friend as the dirtiest soldier he had ever seen. His eyes were usually drunk, with curiosity or alcohol, but his capacity to recover from the night before was the envy of his students.

To be taught by Richard Cobb, often in a class as small as an early Christian *cénacle*, was to be taught life. He did not simply describe, he transformed himself into, a farmer overeating merely for the pleasure of depriving Parisians of their food; a revolutionary who had marinated in envy all his life and was using his position on the Committee of Public Safety for revenge; or a tritoseuse who preferred the lists of the guillotined to contain spectacular noble, rather than plebeian, names.

Cobb enjoyed Oxford, perhaps because it provided so many opportunities to study individuals and puncture pretension. He admired Maurice Bowra and Arthur Marder as much as French colleagues such as his patron Georges Lyeboire or the historian of the *sans-culottes* Albert-Marius Soboul. He described the funeral of his friend Jack Gallagher, the historian of Africa, as "the saddest sight I have ever seen".

Cobb loved archival research, particularly (until he was banned after a row) in the Archives Nationales in Paris, one of the most beautiful build-

ings in Europe. He wrote as well as he taught, at first articles in learned journals such as *Présence Africaine*, then exhaustively researched studies of the revolutionary armies of 1793-94, popular protest and death in Paris.

His first book to reach a wider audience was *A Second Identity* (1969) – the title refers to his French self, a collection of reviews on subjects ranging from the Jacobin historian Georges Lefebvre to "la bonne dame de Loudun" Marie Besnard, accused of having murdered 11 of her relations. His style, at once insolent, erudite and parenthetical (sentences could be as long as paragraphs), won him many admirers.

A Second Identity was followed by an *armée révolutionnaire* of books. Among the best were *Promenades: a historian's appreciation of modern French literature* (1980), which described favourite novelists such as Marcel Pagnol and Raymond Queneau; *The Streets of Paris* (1980), a dazzling essay on four *arrondissements* of Paris, extolling balustrades and courtyards of the 19th century, washable brothel-fronts of the 1930s and Tunisian shops of the 1960s, with photographs by Nicholas Breach; *Still Life* (1983), sketches from a Tunbridge Wells childhood; *A Classical Education* (1985), an unforgettable account of his friendship with a Dublin matriculate; and *Something to Hold On To* (1988), openly frosty autobiographical sketches describing his relations, the book illustrator Frank Papé and the pleasures of the lavatory.

Cobb believed that a historian should get inside the threshold, step beyond the door, and write about private people and private places. Accents, clothes (in his youth Tunbridge Wells was "a place where clothes called to clothes, cutting out words and greetings"), family photographs and loneliness in cities interested him more than intellectual debates or economic graphs. He

extended the frontiers of history so far that his books included descriptions of the tin trunks of French officials on the way to the colonies in a Marseilles hotel, girls in hotel rooms crouching over bidets in "a rapid gesture of orthodoxy rather than of hygiene" and the third army, of "enormous, long-whiskered, dark-coated, red-eyed rats", below the Germans and the resistors, which surfaced in Paris during the occupation. His unique ability to understand other people enabled him to make collaborators human and a childhood in Tunbridge Wells between the wars interesting.

At least until his last marriage, and the birth of his children, Cobb was a lonely man who sought safety in familiar

routines and faces. His own private threshold could be hard to cross. One of his chief pleasures was to attack solemnly and falsely, the cults of statistics, of student revolution and, in the end, of the French Revolution.

"Emphasise my frivolity," he once told me, as he poured the last of a bottle.

Philip Mansel

Richard Cobb's *A Classical Education* is a short and macabre book mainly concerned with an Irish schoolfriend who murdered his mother, partly (the Irish police then suspected) at Cobb's urging, writes Tim Hinton. This matricide was of the future historian of many criminal acts. Cobb kept up with the

murderer during and after his long detention and delighted in inviting him to the Balliol high table, on one occasion carefully placing him next to an Emeritus Professor of Law: "My guest is keenly interested in the Irish penal system."

Cobb was personally a pacifist man. Yet he liked to study violence and however eminent his academic position he was inclined both to low life and to pranks that his colleagues considered juvenile. His sympathy with people at odds with the police began, if not at school, with his first experience of France. He was asked to leave Shrewsbury immediately after he gained a Postmaster'ship at Merton College. The intervening year was spent in Paris, where he first of all discovered the socialist politician and historian Jean Jaurès, a lasting influence. "He was a warm man with a good heart; he understood poverty."

As an undergraduate in the late Thirties Cobb regularly returned to Paris and attended lectures at the Sorbonne given by Georges Lefebvre – the most important of the influences on Cobb's historical writing. The Frenchman was Marxist-inclined but not a Marxist. He was interested in *mentalités* and history written "from below". He was a master of archival research; and however sophisticated his methods were in library or study he wrote history in terms that could be understood by a layman. All this was transmitted to Cobb.

Some of Cobb's own work in the Archives Nationales he did not use for 30 years. One of his most perfect books, *Death in Paris 1795-1801* (1978), was the result of the discovery of old notes in a forgotten suitcase. Other work of the post-war period is still missing, in particular his short stories, in English and French, his only essays into imaginative writing. Cobb was a visitor to Fitzrovia during his frequent post-war trips to London and was friendly with writers such as Julian Maclaren

Ross, Dylan Thomas, Dan Davin and Louis MacNeice.

Cobb was not a Bohemian. In Paris he was poor, studied in the day and spent his nights in the bars and brothels that are lovingly described in later writings. He relied on subventions from Tunbridge Wells; also journalism, and a position teaching English to Air France stewardesses. He was briefly married to an employee of the SNCF. Characteristically, Cobb used his wife's cheap rail tickets to study archives in the regions and consult with the *érudits locaux* who shared his historical interests. There was a second Parisian marriage in the Forties, bewildering alike to Cobb, his new wife, and her tight-wing and Catholic military family.

Cobb liked to claim that in his Parisian years he was married to the French Communist Party. This was because so many members of the Party, prominent among them his friend Albert Soboul, were contributing to the post-war revival of French history. Certainly Cobb ate and slept in many Communist homes; but his own beliefs, were, by comparison, simple. He disliked authority and people who sought power in any sphere. He often spoke of the great political truth that most people simply want their rulers to leave them alone. It was because of Cobb's Communist connections that his work was known to the English Marxist historians who became prominent in university departments in the late Fifties and early Sixties. One of them was Christopher Hill, who eventually brought Cobb to Balliol.

Cobb was concerned with his feeling that he might one day write history that was a part of literature. *A Second Identity*, whose long autobiographical preface explains Cobb's allegiances within two differing cultures, first revealed Cobb to an English audience as a writer who combined great knowledge with extraordinary prose, but he never joined literature in the way he privately hoped. A

biography of Simonon was wisely abandoned. He none the less made a contribution to the prose of our time, often in an unexpected fashion. He was for instance the master of a specialised genre, the academic *écrit* (or *écrit*). Within this form he wrote humorously, but with delicate funerary feelings. Some examples are to be found in his *People and Places* (1985). It is characteristic of Cobb that this book opens with an *écrit* not to an historian but to the owner of a long-established Parisian night-club.

Those of us who were Balliol undergraduates while Cobb was there will long remember his inspiring talk and his urticant disregard for decorum and discipline. I still hear the French martial songs and the crashing of glasses. He was both an example of the scholarly life and a lord of misrule.

In his later years Cobb gave popular lectures in Worcester College, always with a pint on the lectern, saw old pupils at lunchtime, then cycled up the Woodstock Road to his home at Wolvercote – a small house, not at all pretty – where he lived with his wife, Margaret, a former student from his time in Leeds. The acknowledgements to *Paris and its Provinces* (1975) speak of his love of family and his affection for Worcester. "Now I feel that perhaps I do have a place in an institution. Of course, I may be quite alone in this conviction."

Richard Charles Cobb, historian: born Essex 20 May 1917; Lecturer in History, UCL, Aberystwyth 1955-61; Lecturer, Leeds University 1962; Fellow and Tutor in Modern History, Balliol College, Oxford 1962-72 (Hon Fellow 1977); FBA 1967; Reader in French Revolutionary History, Oxford University 1969-72; Professor of Modern History 1973-84; Senior Research Fellow, Worcester College, Oxford 1984-87; CBE 1978; married thrice 1963 Margaret Tennant (three sons, one daughter); died Abingdon 15 January 1996.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

HAPPOLD: Edmund (Ted), distinguished engineer and most beloved man, died in his sleep at home on Friday 12 January 1996. A memorial service for worship, to give thanks for his life, will be held at 2pm on Wednesday 31 January at Friends House, Euston Road, London.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-233 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Duke of Kent, Vice-Chancellor, attended the annual dinner of the British Overseas Trade Board, Brown's Hotel, London W1.

Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, the Queen's Life Guard, at Horse Guards (Lt. Col. Mervyn Glynne) and the Grenadier Guards, the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Welsh Guards.

Forthcoming marriages

Miss N. K. Fox and Mr A. J. Seery. The engagement is announced between Natasha, daughter of Colin and Marianne Fox, and Adrian, son of Jack and Mary Seery.

Birthdays

Mr Colin Banks, graphic designer, 64; Sir Alexander Blair, former Writer to the Signet, 88; Air Marshal Sir Robert Craven, 80; Sir Robin Dunn, former Lord Justice of Appeal, 78; Professor John Enderby, physicist, 66; Professor Sir Peter Hirsch, metallurgist, 71; Professor Elaine Murphy, psychogeriatrician, 49; Mr Richard Ormond, Director, National Maritime Museum, 57; Miss Nadine Peppard, race relations consultant, 74; Mr Keith Shackleton, artist and naturalist, 73; Professor Sir Frederick Stewart, geologist, 80; Lord Thomson of Monifieth, former chairman of the IBA, 75; Mr Cliff Thorburn, snooker player, 48; Miss Christine Trueman, tennis player, 35; Lady (Marian) Vaisey, art critic, 58; Professor Sir William Wade QC, former Master, Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, 78; Mr Michael White, theatre and film producer, 60.

Anniversaries

Berthe François-Joseph Palma, actor-manager, 1763; André Michélin,

tyre maker, 1853; Eibel Merman (Zimmerman), singer and actress, 1909. Deaths: Edmund Spenser, poet, 1599; Carole Lombard (Jane Alice Peters), actress, killed in an air crash, 1942; Arturo Toscanini, conductor, 1957. On this day: Ivan the Terrible, the first Russian Tsar, was crowned, 1547; the British expedition led by Ernest Shackleton reached the South Magnetic Pole, 1909; the Gulf war started, 1991. Today is the Feast Day of St Bernard and Others, St Fursey, St Henry of Cocket, St Honoratus of Arles, St Marcellus I pope and St Priscilla.

Lectures

National Portrait Gallery: Roger Hargreaves, "American Photographers: Richard Avedon, Annie Leibovitz, Irving Penn", 1.10pm. Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution, London N6: Al Alvarez, "The Language of Dreams", 7.45pm. Leicester University: Professor Steven Myint, "Water Water Everywhere, but is it safe to drink?", 5.15pm.

Luncheons

Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Mr Malcolm Rifkind QC MR, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, held a luncheon yesterday at 1 Carlton Gardens, London SW1, in honour of Dr Jaime Gama, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic.

Unsubstantiated bias allegation should not be made

LAW REPORT

16 January 1996

Thatcher v Douglas and another, Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Nourse, Lord Justice Hutchison and Lord Justice Thorpe); 19 December 1995

A barrister's duty to put his client's case could not extend to advancing his client's unsubstantiated belief that the judge was corrupt or biased. The barrister's duty was either to decline to comply with his client's instructions or to withdraw from the case.

The Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal by the defendants, James K. Douglas and his wife, Diane Douglas, from Mr Recorder Doune QC's decision that the plaintiff, R.G. Thatcher, had a right to use a slipway which was enforceable against the defendants.

The plaintiff claimed a right to use a concrete slipway leading to tidal mudflats in the area of the common boundary between his and the defendants' houses. In January 1994 the recorder decided that the plaintiff and his successors in title

had an easement over the slipway which, although not registered, was an overriding interest within section 70 of the Land Registration Act 1925.

The defendants appealed. Their original notice of appeal asserted that the recorder's decision was against the weight of the evidence and his decision on section 70 was wrong.

When the appeal was listed for hearing in October 1995, the defendants wished to advance allegations that the recorder had been guilty of corruption and bias. The appeal was adjourned to allow the recorder to comment on the allegations. A 16-page document containing allegations was sent to the recorder, who dealt with the specific points which he felt merited comment.

Graham Lyons (Peter M. Ross, *Havant*) for the defendants; E.A.S. Pearson (Michael Daltara, *Hillingdon*) for the plaintiff.

Lord Justice Nicholls, giving the court's judgment, said that the document sent to the recorder contained matters which illustrated both the complete inappropriateness of asserting that such matters could even begin to be indicative of corruption or bias and the irrelevance and impertinence of asking such questions.

It was most regrettable that the appeal was at a late stage converted into an attack on the integrity of the recorder without the smallest foundation or the slightest evidence. Earlier letters written by the first defendant to the Lord Chancellor, the recorder, his own solicitors and the court revealed paranoid thinking and contained threats to do grievous bodily harm to the recorder.

In the summer the first defendant apparently accepted proper advice that the appeal should not be contaminated by

allegations of corruption and bias. At a late stage he changed his instructions and insisted they should be made. Mr Lyons acted on those instructions.

While the court appreciated the difficult situation in which Mr Lyons found himself, he had made a grave error of judgment in complying with his client's instructions. The duty of counsel to put his client's case could not extend to advancing the client's belief, unsubstantiated by any evidence, that the judge was corrupt or biased. His duty in such circumstances was either to decline to comply with the instructions or to withdraw from the case.

Moreover the defendants had been granted a legal aid certificate to pursue the appeal. Specific authority ought to have been obtained from the legal aid board for the further conduct of the appeal on added grounds of corruption and bias. Thus the board would have had

the opportunity to refuse to allow public money to be wasted on such an unwarranted exercise.

Having considered the other arguments the recorder's finding of an easement in title was not against the weight of the evidence. The question whether the easement was an overriding interest within section 70 depended on whether *Colsteel Ltd v Allon House Holdings Ltd* [1983] 1 WLR 204 was distinguishable or wrong. No ground had been shown on which the decision was distinguishable.

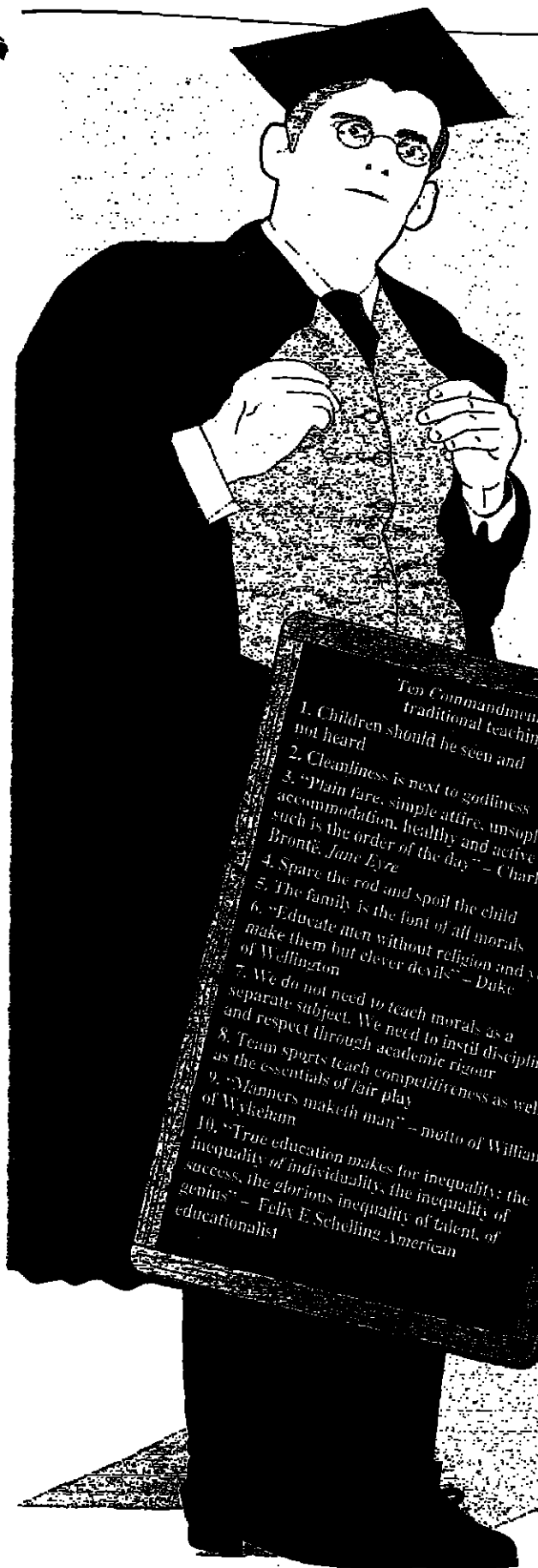
It was argued that the decision was wrong because rights under the Land Registration Rules 1925 applied only to legal and not to equitable interests. That argument involved a restriction which, in property legislation, could not be implied when it could so easily have been expressed. The recorder's decision was correct on this point also.

Ying Hui Tam, Barrister

Dr. J. C. 1. 2. 3.

Could schools deliver a national moral curriculum?
Judith Judd examines the limits to teaching ethics

Beyond good and evil



The Traditionalist

NAME: GEORGE BATES
AGE: 53
TRAINING: KING EDWARD VI GRAMMAR SCHOOL, STOMP GROVE, ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD
SPORT: RUGBY UNION (STRICTLY AMATEUR)
CAR: BRITISH-MADE - USUALLY ROVER
FAVOURITE MUSIC: ELGAR
RELIGION: C of E

Adam and Eve, good and evil, right and wrong are back in fashion. Justifying Platon's doubts about truth are out. Let us judge as well as understand, punish as well as praise, discipline as well as tolerate. That was the flavour of remarks yesterday from Dr Nick Tate, the Government's chief curriculum adviser, who complained loudly that morality had become no more than a matter of taste; a moral choice was becoming indistinguishable from choosing a new sofa. There should be a national moral code for schools which should teach pupils more clearly about the difference between right and wrong. He deplored "politically correct" young teachers who are so afraid of hurting their pupils' self-esteem that they cannot get off the moral fence.

Dr Tate was careful to castigate society as well as schools for young people's belief that morality is merely a question of taste. Yet his general message is clear enough. Teachers could do better in inculcating right and wrong. He is not alone in his rallying call for a return to tradition. His drift is in tune with the Conservatives' attempt to take the moral high ground, which foundered so disastrously in John Major's back to basics campaign.

During the past decade, the right in this country has allied itself with traditional Christianity and called for a return to old-fashioned morality. Like the Radical Right in the United States, it believes schools are central to change. This concern with school's role in teaching morals is relatively recent. Spiritual and moral education was first made a legal requirement in the 1988 Education Reform Act, which said the curriculum should prepare "the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at school and in society". Later, ministers decreed

that schools' moral and spiritual standards should be officially inspected.

Yet the notion that schools are failing to teach morality is an odd one. Dr Tate's analysis is flawed in several respects. First, as he points out, schools are "by and large, very moral places". How could it be otherwise? Few teachers punishing a playground bully would fail to pronounce on violence. Few teachers of a class where children's pens keep mysteriously disappearing would not deplore stealing. From the age of three or four, teachers have to help children to take turns and share with others or it would not be possible to teach them at all.

A government that has denigrated teachers can hardly call on them to be the nation's moral leaders

There may be, as Dr Tate suggests, a few trainee teachers who are nervous about making moral pronouncements, but it is actions, not words, that count. And, once teachers are in schools, moral actions are an unavoidable part of their daily life.

These teachers, Dr Tate suggests, are so intimidated by the prevailing culture which opposes the imposition of racial, class or gender values on pupils that they are frightened to teach the difference between right and wrong. The comment will play well with Conservatives and traditionalists who castigated Labour councils for their anti-sexist and anti-racist initiatives. But surely both sexual and racial discrimination would appear on Dr Tate's list of wrongs.

That highlights a further difficulty for Dr Tate's proposed national moral code, which he envisages would be drawn up by employers, teachers, trade unionists, academics. That is: there would probably be little chance of agreeing on anything beyond the obvious. His national forum would simply end up reinventing the Ten Commandments with a dash of

New Testament "love thy neighbour" thrown in. After that, it would be in difficulties. Sir Ron Dearing, chairman of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, called for a modern Ten Commandments. But how much of what is modern could be included? Stealing and killing are wrong but what about homosexuality and single-parent families, abortion, divorce, adultery, consuming soft drugs, television sex and violence.

Even Dr Tate's contention that teachers are concentrating too much on self-esteem in personal and social education lessons and too little on moral error will be challenged by those who believe that lack of

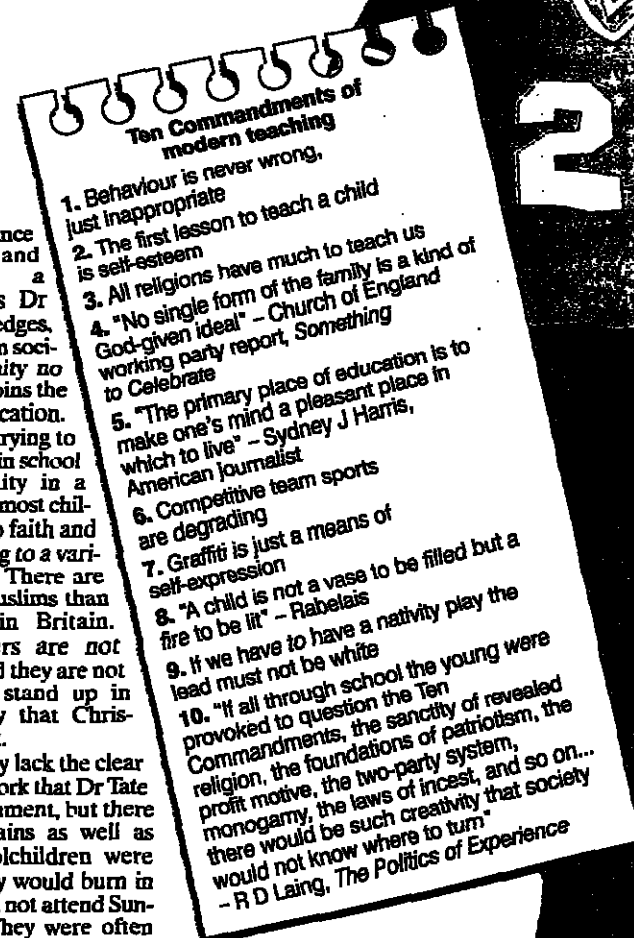
in the importance of religion and churchgoing, a reflection, as Dr Tate acknowledges, of the values in society. Christianity no longer underpins the values of education. It is no good trying to base morality in school on Christianity in a society where most children are of no faith and the rest belong to a variety of others. There are now more Muslims than Methodists in Britain. Most teachers are not Christians and they are not prepared to stand up in class and say that Christianity is right.

Schools may lack the clear moral framework that Dr Tate and Sir Ron lament, but there have been gains as well as losses. Schoolchildren were once told they would burn in hell if they did not attend Sunday school. They were often beaten for hitting each other. Children may have done what they were told more often, but they were less well equipped to challenge adult follies, to think for themselves.

Gillian Shephard, Secretary of State for Education, was cautious in her response to Dr Tate. Schools had an important role to play in teaching pupils the difference between right and wrong, she said, but it was the attitude of parents that was of paramount importance.

She is right. Children spend most of their time at home and their role models are their parents. Their ideas of right and wrong are formed before they arrive at school. To impose a new set of duties on over-stretched schools to attempt to improve the nation's morals would be an unnecessary distraction.

Teachers cannot be expected to carry out such a crusade. Indeed, they lack authority and confidence they once had. That is the fault of society in general and politicians in particular rather than of the profession. A government that has spent so much time denigrating teachers is in a poor position to call on them to be the nation's moral leaders.



The Trendy

NAME: SARAH JOHNSON
AGE: 26
TRAINING: THE VINE COMPREHENSIVE, BASINGSTOKE, AMBRIDGE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
SPORT: ROCK-CLIMBING
CYCLE: TREK MOUNTAIN BIKE
FAVOURITE MUSIC: PULP
RELIGION: STRICTLY NEW AGE



Old rockers for the Tories

Those aged 18 to 25 are being invited to "Rock the Vote" next month when a new campaign, backed with £1m of record companies' money, tries to encourage young people to use their vote at the next general election.



Wakeman: true blue

The move, based on a similar exercise in the United States, is, according to invitations sent out, "a nationwide music-lead campaign. Nice concept, never mind the spelling."

At times like these, my heart goes out to the Conservative Party. Labour is already claiming the Britpop supergroups

Blur and Oasis as supporters. The Tories have always found it harder to rally rock stars to the cause.

Not this time, though. A Conservative Central Office spokeswoman tells me triumphantly that Mick Jagger, Rick Wakeman and Queen's Brian May are all true blue. The former Who and Small Faces drummer Kenney Jones even has a photograph of John Major above his snooker table.

Mr Major would be wise to parade all the aforesaid stars at his side in the election campaign. They will make him look terribly youthful.

Friendly Roy

Those who watched the new drama series *Our Friends in the North*, telling the story of four Newcastle chums, may have noticed a peculiar reference. Last night's episode was set at the time of the 1964 general election; and at one point the commentator announced: "Leslie Seymour has lost Sparkbrook." The fate of that Birmingham seat is not generally remembered as one of the most newsworthy items of election night 1964. So why should it figure in a programme about four friends in Newcastle?

The answer could be that even a good new drama needs publicity. And what better to spark a columnist into writing about the series than a mention of Leslie Seymour losing Sparkbrook, particularly as the victor at Sparkbrook that night in 1964 was Roy Hattersley? Mr Hattersley, who has a column in another place, was duly flattered by the reference to his night of glory - and devoted his entire column to the programme.

BILL GATES



E-mail your comments ...

Gates wakes up to e-mail

The famous, such as President Clinton, and the rich, such as Microsoft's founder, Bill Gates, may have e-mail addresses, but do they actually read what's sent to them and bother to reply? In the case of Gates, the

answer is yes ... and speedily. A London reviewer of his new book found a typographical error and e-mailed him about it on Sunday morning. A response came within four hours; all the more impressive as it would have been the middle of the night at his Seattle base. Does the man never sleep? Or does he sleep with a "you have new mail" bleep under his pillow?

'Sun' under a moral cloud

Nick Tate, the Government's school curriculum adviser, who yesterday launched his crusade for schools to teach more about morality, has a Nineties-style morality of his own, I gather.

Last month the *Sun* published a full-page article, purportedly by Tate, whose name appeared at the top in very bold type, on how calculators in schools were stopping a generation of children from learning basic sums. The only problem was, Mr Tate didn't write it. Neither was he interviewed for it. The piece in fact came from a telephone chat between a *Sun* reporter and an official at the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, of which Mr Tate is chief executive.

It is, without question, morally wrong for a newspaper to print an article by a chap who did not write that article. And Mr Tate's office has now



Tate: strict with the Sun

given the *Sun* a strict moral choice to make. Either apologise for putting Mr Tate's name at the top of the article - or pay Mr Tate a fee for having purportedly written it.

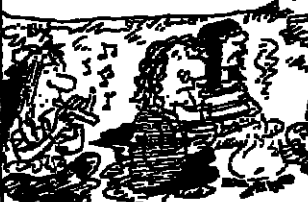
A lesson for little Rhodes

That, at least, is a more peaceful moral code than that which held sway in the boyhood of the former education minister Sir Rhodes Boyson. At the weekend he nostalgically recalled his father's reaction to young Rhodes failing his 11-plus because he skived off an exam to watch *Blackburn Rovers*: "He hit me for the first time, literally knocking me out, and for the first time in my life education became very important."

Eagle Eye

Generation Why

by Tony Reeve and Steve Way



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THE INDEPENDENT

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How scared do we need to get?

When people get scared they take notice: that is what is happening with Britain's creaking system for caring for the mentally ill.

A string of killings by psychiatric patients has pushed the Government into action. In the past couple of years hundreds of mentally ill people have been taken out of the prison system and off the streets and put into the NHS. Orders have been issued from on high in the Department of Health that doctors should only discharge psychiatric patients into well managed community care schemes. More hospital beds, though probably too few, are promised for the long-term ill.

Yet these measures hardly match the grim picture painted by yesterday's report from the Royal College of Psychiatrists on homicides and suicides by the mentally ill. It describes overcrowded hospitals, where the ill are forced out to make way for the even more seriously disturbed. Psychiatrists are quitting the NHS because they have become so concerned at the state of the system. Community care is often little more than decrepit beds where the mentally ill eke out isolated lives, out of touch with health and social services until their condition deteriorates to a point where they have to be readmitted. In short, the system is in a mess. Better management of the system we already spend on caring for the mentally ill would help. If, however, we are serious about tackling the mental healthcare crisis, the financial consequences must be accepted. Extra resources the system needs should be focused on two areas. First, there are two few institutions - hospitals, secure units, nursing homes - offering places for the long-term sick. Many of

these patients have come out of the prison system or were homeless and need long-term, medically supervised, sometimes secure, accommodation, which is in chronically short supply. Such accommodation can be provided by both the public and the private sector.

Second, we need an improved infrastructure to support mentally ill people in the community so that they do not turn to hospitals as their first port of call. Community services often shut down from 5pm to 9am on weekdays and for the entire weekend. Local "crisis houses" with 24-hour nursing care and social support are needed. A small army of carers is required to support people at home.

None of these policies is controversial. Together, they would take the strain off hospital psychiatric wards, which are fast turning into dangerous bedlams for the insane. But at present all this is just a dream.

The reason is that mental health cannot compete politically with demands for shorter waiting lists. This week's report on psychiatric patients will worry those fearful of being murdered; it will arouse anger about neglect of the suicidal and vulnerable. But it will not produce the same results as last week's row about people waiting hours for treatment at casualty departments because there are too few beds and junior doctors. Politicians know where most votes are lost and won. They invest accordingly. What's missing is serious leadership prepared to make the public realise that better mental health care means less of something else. So far, no political party has been brave enough to spell out the choices. With the misery of neglect so evident, it is time to face that challenge.

Political life with added seasoning

Move over Delia. German chancellor Helmut Kohl's new book, *A Culinary Journey Through Germany's Regions*, will soon be jostling with Jocelyn Dimbleby, Elizabeth David and others for space on the shelves of bookshops, if not the most fashionable kitchens. Astute Rhinelanders that he is, Chancellor Kohl has spotted a gap in the European market. While the cosmopolitan middle classes may be lapping up bruschetta and sun-dried tomatoes from Italy or tapas and paella from Spain, pig's stomach and rye bread from Germany have not yet taken off. But their time will come, if the 18-stone Kohl has his way. A *Helmut Kohl's Winter Collection* is surely only just round the corner.

More remarkably than a German enthusing for fine food is a politician revealing a hinterland, as Denis Healey used to describe his outside interests. What a relief it is to find a politician with a passion beyond politics, the semblance of a normal life, an ability to enjoy pleasures. Sadly there is little sign of a British equivalent in the House of Commons.

Politics in Britain has become a grimy earnest world inhabited only by the determined professional. With little light-hearted let-up to the machinations of government or the frustrated speeches of opposition, Westminster is not a place for the frivolous. True, John Major has a rarely indulged passion for cricket. And Tony Blair enjoys spending time with his family. But these are hardly signs of diverse and interesting personalities. And

the sober faces of Jack Straw and John Redwood never reveal a glimmer of genuine enthusiasm for ordinary recreational activities.

Where are the Healeys and Heaths of the current generation? After electoral defeat in 1974, Ted Heath published books on sailing and music and travel including *Sailing: A Course in My Life* and *Travels: People and Places in My Life*. Meanwhile, Denis Healey's autobiography is dripping with references to art, music and literature. Admittedly both men have chosen rather eccentric ways to sell their enthusiasms. But with both there is a sense that politics is the foremost but not the only important force in their lives. With the modern crop of politicians it seems that their characters and interests are moulded to suit their rise up the career ladder, the demands of public appearance, and political niceties.

Top politicians with the potential to write a best-seller seem mainly to be abroad. Bill and Hillary Clinton may yet enrich our reading with *Rural Property Investments: A Beginner's Guide*. But here in Britain the prospects are not bright. The best we might hope for from Tony Blair is a short memoir of his days as an aspirant rock star, and Lady Thatcher could pen a do-it-yourself guide to growing old gracefully. As for John Major... Well it isn't clear what Mr Major could convincingly demonstrate an interest in. Motorway maps of Great Britain - with cones and Happy Eaters clearly marked, perhaps?



"I'll listen to you, if you'll listen to me"

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The stakeholder society: Blarkism and sustainable development

From Mr Michael Meacher, MP
Sir: Your editorial about the stakeholder society ("Blair and Clarke: are they by chance related?", 15 January) perversely misses the point. Of course it's not about privatising the welfare state, any more than it's about any other of the state mantras to which right-wing commentators have spent the last week trying to appropriate it. It's about having an inclusive society, not one where millions are shut out by the deepest divisions British society has suffered since the Thirties. It's about a participating citizenry, not one where people are merely passive ciphers of power always located beyond them. It's about balancing competitiveness with co-operative relationships, since social and economic partnerships can often produce the best results rather than unrestrained competition. And it's about reciprocal rights and responsibilities, since the more committed the stakeholder in his contribution to the general enterprise, the bigger his ultimate reward.

The stakeholder concept is surely an idea whose time has come when more people feel

excluded than at any time in living memory. With unemployment only once below 2 million in the past 15 years, a growing pool of long-term unemployed, including many school-leavers, feel a sense of hopelessness.

Nor is the stakeholder society the enemy of economic success in the marketplace. Unremitting aggressive individualism in the past 15 years hasn't prevented Britain slipping from 13th to 18th place in the international competitiveness league. Indeed, some of the most successful market economies of the past 30 years such as Japan, Germany and Singapore have adopted a strong, co-operative stakeholder model which has been a major component of their competitive edge.

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL MEACHER
MP for Oldham West (Lab)
House of Commons
London, SW1
14 January
The writer is Shadow Secretary of State for Employment.

From Mr Henry Curlews
Sir: It is surprising to read today that Tony Blair's "stakeholder

society" is so similar to Margaret Thatcher's "enterprise culture". He clearly visualises the economy as a tough self-seeking arena in the same way that Mrs Thatcher did. The only difference is that she believed in the Adam Smith version of events, in which self-seeking contributes to the common good, and needs little or no direction. Tony Blair visualises the same process as the best way to create wealth, but he believes in adjusting it so that "no group or class is set apart or excluded". Both philosophies see business as a purely competitive, self-seeking exercise.

Other cultures have no difficulty in seeing business and the economy as a co-operative venture, to which people contribute in order to meet their varying needs. It seems to be a peculiarly British idea that selfishness is the whole basis of our lives.

Yours sincerely,
HENRY CURLEWS
Shrewsbury, Shropshire
15 January

From Mr Colin Dewnsnap
Sir: In your leading article "Blair and Clarke: are they by chance

related?", you analyse in some detail which of two approaches, "Blarkism" or "shrinking the state/creating an anti-European Little Englander" is likely to best achieve a given objective - our survival in today's global, competitive economy. Surely, though, you have grossly oversimplified the objective. If we do not recognise the need for "sustainable development" in accordance with the decisions at Rio in 1992, it is not possible that the avid pursuit of global competitiveness in economic terms could lead to terminal decline.

For me, the inclusion in the long-term economic objective of this country of the need for the worldwide achievement of sustainable development helps me in assessing the likely efficacy of the two approaches. I prefer to go for a stake in a country that endeavours to give a world lead towards universal survival in order to try to ensure that we all have a future. We need an approach that encompasses a world vision, not a "Little Englander" one.

Yours faithfully,
COLIN DEWSNAP
Christchurch, Dorset

Blood service to be proud of

From Dr E. Angela E. Robinson
Sir: I write to dispel the myths about the blood service given credence by Louise Jury in her articles "Death by a thousand cuts" (11 January) and "Hospitals rationed as blood stocks hit new low" (11 January). Yes, the blood service is going through a period of change, but, beyond the gut feeling that "we don't like it", no clinical concerns about patient safety remain unresolved, particularly with medical colleagues.

The suggestion that donors are "quitting in disgust" is simply untrue. More donations were collected in 1995 than ever before in the history of the blood service. Donations exceeded 200,000 per month on five occasions in that year, something never before achieved. It is apparent that our volunteer donors are more than willing to help the record number of patients being treated.

Blood stocks are currently low; this is not unusual for this time of year, but again through the generosity of our donors we are managing to meet hospital need. In December 1995, on average more donors were bled each day (9,200) than in any previous December. So far this month collection averages 9,960 per day. We have a blood service to be proud of. It is becoming better through the responsible national co-ordination which the National Blood Authority has achieved. Yours faithfully, ANGELA ROBINSON Medical Director National Blood Authority Watford, Hertfordshire 11 January

A deal for Delia

From Ms Dolores O'Donoghue
Sir: Delia Smith recipes are not only "lying all around the place" (Miles Kingston: "Fancy a little Delia, réchauffée?", 11 January), they are also invading *The Archers*.

Phil Archer (who, to the best of my knowledge, has never even made a cup of coffee) has suddenly taken up cookery and has been enthusiastically discussing Delia Smith recipes with Nelson Gabriel. Poor old Uncle Tom has flown Brookfield in search of plain food. Archers addicts are being "fed" recipes on a nightly basis. Phil has even toddled into the village shop to buy English pudding rice - telling Betty how it can be substituted for pella rice (as per *Winter Collection*).

This couldn't have anything to do with plugging the BBC Delia Smith *Winter Collection* books - could it? Sincerely, DOLORES O'DONOGHUE Morden, Surrey 12 January

Pioneer Goon

From Mr Colin Berkeley
Sir: Eagle Eye believes that the expression "royalty of no fixed abode" belongs to Tony Banks MP (Diary, 11 January). Not so; this apt phrase was raised some time in the late 1950s by one William "Mate" Cobblers, when he informed Ned Seagoon that he could not sleep on a particular park bench as it was "reserved for royalty of no fixed abode" ("Disenfranchised", *Goon Show*). As so often, Spike Milligan was there first. Yours faithfully, COLIN BERKELEY Horsham, West Sussex

A hell of a question for the church

From Mr Nicolas Walter
Sir: You point out some of the problems which the Church of England has with the doctrine of Hell ("The Church's empty Hell", 11 January), but you leave out the most serious one.

All the doctrines of Christianity must in the end rest on the teachings of its founder, Jesus, as expressed in its scriptures, the New Testament; and it is clear that these include a belief in a literal and physical Hell, described as "unquenchable fire", "a furnace of fire" in which "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth", "a lake of fire burning with brimstone", where sinners and unbelievers are tormented with flame "day and night for ever and ever", and so on.

When the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England

says that these are "appalling theologies which divide God into a sadistic monster and left searing psychological scars on many", it is only echoing what freethinkers have been saying for several centuries. And when it tries to make sense of Hell as some kind of metaphorical or spiritual annihilation, it is simply making nonsense of Christianity as it has been for nearly 2,000 years.

Yours faithfully,
NICOLAS WALTER
Rationalist Press Association
London, N1
11 January

From Fr Cary Dobbie
Sir: My starting point in theology has always been the belief that the best clue to the nature of God lies in my own.

Put simply, I cannot and will

not believe in a God who is more unpleasant than I am. If I do not will the damnation of any soul, not even that of Adolf Hitler, then the notion of some sort of everlasting holocaust is so at variance with what I know of myself, as to render it wholly unbelievable of the God who said: "Fear not, I am the first and the last". I recall a piece of "grave humour" which summed it up along the following lines:

Here lies Martin Eignbrod, Have mercy on my soul, Lord God. As I would, were I Lord God, And you were Martin Eignbrod. Why will people make God nastier than themselves? Yours sincerely, CARY DOBBIE Chaplain Christ's Hospital Horsham, West Sussex 13 January

Keith Joseph's legacy to Thatcher

From Mr Richard P. Welch
Sir: Baroness Thatcher has just given us all the benefit of her wisdom in the Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture, as if we hadn't had enough of this during the 11 years of her premiership.

It is worth remembering that Lord Joseph's radical thinking led to a lot of wrong decisions. He was involved in housing (he built tower blocks); he was involved in the health service (he put all the best nurses behind desks); he was involved in education (he managed to alienate the entire teaching profession, losing all goodwill and ensuring the long-term abandonment of weekend sporting activities in nearly all state schools). A sorry record.

However, in later years Lord Joseph did have the grace to admit from time to time that he had got some things wrong. What a pity that Lady Thatcher did not feel the need to follow her mentor's example.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD P. WELCH
Nantglyn, Cwtyd
12 January

From Mr John Davies
Sir: Two sentences in Baroness Thatcher's Keith Joseph Memorial lecture reveal the self-delusion at the heart of Euroscepticism. She referred to the European Court as "undermining our judicial system". It is not undermining it. It is part of it and it was a Conservative government of which Lady Thatcher was a member that made it so.

She also spoke of curbing the powers of the courts by an amendment of the European Communities Act. While we remain a member of the European Union, Parliament does not have the necessary authority. The powers of the court are derived from the treaty, which can be amended only by the unanimous agreement of the members.

It would, of course, be possible to remove the authority of the court completely by repealing the act and leaving the union, but I doubt if any businessman in the audience would have been happy to hear her suggest that. Yours faithfully, JOHN DAVIES Bookham, Surrey

Fertiliser facts

From Mrs Joyce Unwins
Sir: While agreeing with David Bellamy's views on world population, I was concerned to note errors in his article on China today ("Is China really so bad?", 12 January). The fall in world grain output is mostly attributable to the disastrous agricultural situation in most of the countries in the former Soviet Union and central Europe rather than "ever-rising levels of fertiliser application". In fact, world fertiliser consumption has dropped dramatically since 1990.

Furthermore, although China is a large user of organic fertilisers, it is also the world's largest consumer of mineral (or chemical) fertilisers. That China can feed itself is mainly due to the low per capita consumption of meat: increasing prosperity among the Chinese population means that demand for meat will rise, necessitating substantial increases in grain output for feedstock.

Yours faithfully,
JOYCE UNWINS
London, N8
12 January

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Innocent days at the Thursday Club

I think I am probably one of the last surviving members of the old Thursday Club, the gang of cronies that the Duke of Edinburgh used to gather round him in the 1950s to have a bit of fun away from his serious life at Buckingham Palace. The club was strictly all-male, but that does not mean there were not women at these gatherings. After all, as Arthur Koestler once said to me, "The extraordinary thing about men at all-male gatherings is that they talk about women non-stop, whereas at mixed functions the men talk only about male hobbies such as sport, politics and cars - never about women, even though there are many women present."

A clever man, Koestler. I would not like to give the impression, by the way, that Arthur Koestler was present at these little get-togethers. He was present, very often, but I would not like to give that impression, as he often asked me never to reveal that he had come there. "My dear boy," he used to say, "I have been to gatherings like this in Central Europe before the war, gatherings of princes and showgirls and intellectuals, and always the same thing happened on the occasions."

"What was that?" I said.
"The Nazis invaded," he said, with a shudder.



MILES KINGSTON

On an average night of the Thursday Club there would be 10 or 15 members present. There would be Lord Louis Mountbatten, Arthur Koestler, Prince Philip, Cecil Beaton, and little Larry Adler playing his mouth organ in the corner, and maybe one or other of the Kray brothers. There would also be the ladies, whose names I remember as Flo, Loulou, Beryl, Gerie, Simone, Pat and one or two others. To begin with, I puzzled over their presence there.

"You men are all distinguished people," I remember saying to Lord Louis Mountbatten. "You are all distinguished in action, or thought, or culture, or in heredity. But these girls..."
"Don't knock these girls," said Lord Louis.

"I had no intention," I said stiffly. But he was not listening to me.
"These girls are all great ladies in

their own right," he said. "The Duchess of Northumberland, the Percy, the Lady Devonshire..."

"These are their titles?" I said, amazed.

"No," he said. "They are the pubs they work at."

There was a chorus of coarse laughter from the gathered throng, but to my amazement Lord Louis Mountbatten burst into tears and started cradling his head on his arm. "Nobody understands me," he said. "Nobody loves me any more. Especially in India."

"Oh, knock it off, Louis!" Philip would say. "OK, so you slaughtered a couple of million Indians during Partition. OK, so you made a mistake. But don't let it get you down! Don't spoil the party! And no pictures please, Cecil!"

This to Cecil Beaton, who had already got his little Brownie out. "If you don't want photos, why do you ask me here?" said Cecil, looking aggrieved.

"We shall have photos when we are ready for the group photo," said Philip. "It is very important that these occasions should look innocent when the time comes."

"When what time comes?" I asked. "When they write my life story," said Philip.

There was an explosion of laughter at this.

"Who on earth would want to write your life story?" said old John Betjeman, who dropped in to the Thursday Club occasionally. "You are no more interesting than a public statue. You have done nothing except marry the Queen. That is all you have done."

"It will be enough, one day," sighed Philip. "One day in the future biographers will peer into the Royal Family's history looking for dirt. They will say, did Prince Philip ever have a wild life? Are there dark secrets? And they will discover the existence of the Thursday Club!"

"But nothing exciting ever happens at the Thursday Club!" said Flo, pointing. "Nobody ever gets out of line! It is all as safe as houses. We have a drink and we put a Joe Loss record on, but it is all as boring as hell."

"That is the whole point," said Philip. "They will say that, and they will be right and they will not investigate further. This will be a cover-up for..." He looked at his watch. "I must be going now. I have a... meeting. But if anyone rings tell them I am here."

With that he was gone. I often wondered where he was off to. Back to the Palace, I expect.

Societies move to shut out speculators

NIC CICUTTI

Britannia, the UK's sixth largest building society, dramatically halted the opening of any new instant access accounts yesterday in a bid to shut out "carpet-baggers" speculating on a possible flotation.

The society said its move was taken after the number of new accounts being opened in the past few days increased at least tenfold. In many cases, the rush to become Britannia members led to queues stretching out into the street.

John Heaps, chief executive at Britannia, said: "We have experienced a dramatic increase in the number of speculative accounts being opened. It is disrupting our business [and] the interests of our existing customers come first."

Meanwhile, Alliance & Leicester, whose own announcement on demutualisation is believed to be imminent, yesterday closed its Keysaver Account to new investors in a further bid to deter speculators. It raised its minimum level on investment accounts to £5,000 in December.

Its Tessa account with a minimum investment of £1,000 is still available, but sources within the society suggested that fresh speculators might find a retrospective cut-off date has already been imposed.

These decisions are the latest twist in the increasingly frenzied demutualisation fever gripping building societies following Woolwich's announcement last week that it is planning to become a bank.

Every big society, including Nationwide, Bristol & West, and Bradford & Bingley, said yesterday that they had been facing unprecedentedly high numbers of account openings in recent days. The most popular are those where little or no notice need be given before deposits can be withdrawn again. Speculators are hoping to share in on anticipated share

handouts worth up to £1,000 following takeovers or demutualisations announced by several societies in the past year.

In the week before Woolwich's statement, about 40,000 people dashed to open new accounts at the society. However, they then discovered they would not benefit from the shares bonanza thanks to a back-dated cut-off date of December 31.

Since then, attention has switched to other societies thought likely either to convert to bank status or be taken over by another institution.

Multiple account openings have been rife despite a decision by most large societies to raise the minimum needed for membership, from £100 to £500, in August last year.

Although most remaining societies other than A&L and Nationwide are believed to be too small to seek bank status independently, some analysts said they could still merge with similar-sized partners and move to the market that way.

Others could face takeovers from several sources, including large banks, insurance companies, or BAT, the tobacco conglomerate that already owns two insurers, Allied Dunbar and Eagle Star.

Britannia said that in the two days after Woolwich's announcement it had been inundated by new customers. John Heaps said: "It is more important that our staff maintain high quality service for all our existing members than spend time opening these speculative accounts."

Bristol & West said that despite a large increase in new accounts being opened, it had no immediate plans to raise the £500 minimum needed to do so.

A Nationwide spokesman said despite making it clear that it was not about to demutualise, there had been "significant" levels of new accounts opened in the past few days. "We are going to keep the situation under review."

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Bid battle: Sir Anthony's promotion to non-executive chairman 'not too little, too late'



Sitting pretty: Sir Rocco Forte (left) with Sir Anthony Tennant, appointed chairman following pressure from Forte shareholders. Photograph: John Voos

Forte splits top jobs to fend off Granada

DAVID HELLIER

Forte, the hotels and restaurants group trying to fend off a £2.8bn hostile takeover bid from Granada, the television to leisure group, yesterday responded to shareholder pressure and agreed to separate its top two jobs in an attempt to retain its independence.

Forte announced that its deputy chairman, Sir Anthony Tennant, will be promoted to non-executive chairman from 1 February. Sir Rocco Forte, the current chairman and chief executive, will drop his chairman's role.

The move comes eight days before the bid time-table comes to a close and ends a three-year period during which Sir Rocco, son of the company's founder, Charles, held the posts of chairman and chief executive.

Sir Anthony rejected suggestions that the move was too little, too late. "We had not seen this as an issue until recently, but in the past few days our stock-brokers [Cazenove and UBS] said that it was and we have acted in response to what we understand a number of our shareholders wanted."

Some shareholders are believed to have wanted a more extreme change, perhaps backed by the appointment of a new chief executive. But Sir Anthony said Sir Rocco had "tremendous experience" and a fine three-year record as chairman and chief executive. "To have taken him off from his position as chief executive would have been a positive mistake," he said.

Gerry Robinson, Granada's chief executive, was predictably dismissive of the management

reshuffle. "This amounts to nothing more than a titular change—Sir Anthony Tennant has been deputy chairman for the last three years and Sir Rocco has been chief executive for 13 years. Forte's performance during those 13 years speaks for itself."

Granada claimed that in the 13 years during which Sir Rocco had been chief executive, Forte's return for investors had been dramatically less than Granada's in the period since late 1991 when the current management team was installed. Granada says that over the five years prior to its takeover offer, Forte ranked 86th out of the FT-SE 100 while Granada ranked fifth.

Mark Finnie, an analyst following the bid for NatWest Securities said the management move "probably wins a degree of support from certain of the

funds" that hold Forte shares. But it was not the move that some people wanted.

Mr Finnie thought the result of the takeover battle was still in the balance. "I think it will be very close. I don't think Forte would have made the moves if they did not think that they still had a chance of winning through, but I don't think they have too many aces left up their sleeve."

Sir Anthony Tennant, who is 55, said he would take over the leadership of the company's board and be directly responsible for answering to shareholders. Sir Rocco will continue to manage the daily operations of Forte's business.

Sir Anthony's other commitments include a non-executive chairmanship at Christie's, the auction house. He is also a non-executive director of GRE, the Savoy and Banque Nationale de

Paris, and is an adviser to Morgan Stanley, the US investment house.

In a separate development Forte released a new document to shareholders aimed to set out the achievements of the management team at Forte and question Granada's claim that it can make £100m of profit improvements from the business as it plans to retain.

In another development, Accor SA, the world's fourth-largest hotelier, denied speculation it had already agreed to pay Granada £1bn for the Meridien hotel chain if Granada's bid is successful.

Meanwhile, Whitbread was said to be visiting City institutions. There was speculation the group was gauging opinion for a possible lift in its £1.05bn offer for Forte's Happy Eater and Little Chef restaurant chains.

C&W clashes with DTI on foreign appointees

MARY FAGAN

Industrial Correspondent

The Government has blocked attempts by Cable & Wireless to change its articles to allow both its chairman and chief executive to be non-British. The Department of Trade and Industry said that the decision—made possible by the golden share in C&W—was in the "national interest".

The clash was revealed as C&W gained shareholder approval to allow a foreigner to become chief executive as long as the chairman is British but faced anger over rumours of a multi-million-pound payout for the former chairman, Lord Young. The company said the DTI's stance on foreigners was "not a problem" but made it clear that it wanted the constraints completely removed.

A spokesman for the Department of Trade and Industry said: "This is something which was in place when C&W was privatised and we want to keep it that way in the national interest. But we have agreed to make a change from two to one."

Brian Smith, chairman, told shareholders at an extraordinary general meeting that the com-



Brian Smith: Announced plans for new chief executive

pany expects to announce its new chief executive in about two months' time. The group was plunged into turmoil at the end of 1995 when James Ross and Lord Young, then respectively chief executive and chairman, were ousted after a boardroom row.

Mr Smith, who is non-executive and also chairs BAA, said later that he believed the closeness of Lord Young and Mr Ross led to the fracas. He said that his relationship with the new incumbent would be different, adding: "At BAA John Egan [chief executive] does all the

work and I run the board. A similar relationship will be established at Cable & Wireless."

Mr Smith said the shortlist of candidates had between six and eight names, including those of non-British citizens. The list is thought to include Duncan Lewis, who left C&W's Mercury Communications subsidiary in September after nine months.

The group now expects negotiations with Lord Young over a compensation package to be agreed by the end of the month. There has been speculation that Lord Young would demand a payoff of £1m or more. Mr Smith declined to comment but said that the outcome would be "amicable" and that "shareholders will not be disappointed".

Mr Smith said he did not consider there was a case for reviewing the positions of non-executive board members on the grounds of failure to act sooner to prevent the boardroom split that led to the departure of Lord Young and Mr Ross. Rod Olsen, the acting chief executive, said little indication of the growing conflict between the two men had been evident prior to the escalation of events in the autumn.

Options bonanza at Southern

Four directors of Southern Electric, the regional power company, yesterday made £415,000 paper profits on their share options, writes Mary Fagan. They included Henry Casley, chief executive, who made almost £195,000 on his 43,000 options.

Southern was the subject of a £2.8bn bid from National Power, the nation's largest generator, until it was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

It is one of the biggest and most profitable of the regional electricity companies and the new profits made by the directors are bound to fuel Labour Party criticisms of the rewards given to utility company executives.

The gains emerged only days after National Grid announced changes to its directors' share options which could leave them substantially better off than before the flotation of the company in December.

The second-biggest gainer in Southern Electric was John Forbes, who exercised more than 22,000 share options to make a profit of just over £101,000. Jim Deane exercised more than 13,000 options for a profit of £61,000 and Jim Harte just under 13,000 for a profit of £58,000.

All four sold some of their shares to pay tax bills and each transferred a proportion of the remainder to his wife, while keeping the balance. Mr Casley, for example, sold 21,494 and transferred 10,000 shares to his wife.

The decision to refer the bid for Southern by National Power came as a blow to both companies, which had agreed the deal.

The MMC, which is expected to deliver its report to the Government by 22 March, is also investigating an agreed bid for Midlands Electricity by the rival generating company, PowerGen.

Labour joins attack on PIA

Labour's City spokesman, Alastair Darling, yesterday joined the attack against a financial regulator's move to water down rules for financial advisers involved in the misleading of personal pensions, writes Nic Cicutti.

Mr Darling claimed the Personal Investment Authority had backed away from its earlier policy in the face of pressure from specialist insurers who would otherwise have been forced to foot the bill.

"This is a prime example of where self-regulation of financial services does not work," he said. "The regulator is forced to

negotiate with a tied interest and is not able to do it properly."

"The insurance industry must realise that public confidence in it will be further undermined by such behaviour," Mr Darling said he would raise the issue last night in the House of Commons debate on the Finance Bill.

His comments follow a decision by the financial regulator to amend the wording of letters to be sent to savers who may have been wrongly advised to set up private pensions.

After a nine-month boycott from up to 2,000 independent financial advisers and the refusal of indemnity insurers to pick up

the tab for any redress to transfer victims, the PIA finally agreed to delete any reference to compensation from the letters.

Its cave-in has been condemned by the Consumers Association as potentially stopping tens of thousands of people from claiming a review of their pensions. But the Treasury backed the PIA, claiming the decision would break the log-jam and lead to an early review of the most urgent cases.

One mutually owned indemnity insurer, LIBM, also supported the deal, although it argued that the matter should have been resolved months ago.

Fresh job cuts due in finance

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

The pace of job cuts in the financial services sector is expected to accelerate following its sharpest fall for two years in the final quarter of 1995, according to the latest trends survey. Worst-hit by the cuts continue to be the high street banks and insurance companies, as they drive for efficiency gains in an increasingly competitive environment, said the CBI/Coopers & Lybrand Financial Services Survey.

"Companies have responded positively to the strong pressure on their margins by cutting operating costs through employment reductions. These trends are set to continue, suggesting further scope for efficiency gains over the months ahead," said Sudhir Junankar, the CBI's associate director of economic analysis.

Across the board, business confidence showed a slight improvement since the previous survey in September 1995. But there were sharp differences in mood between sectors.

Investment banks were extremely buoyant thanks to the takeover and stock market booms, and fund management is enjoying a good run, while banks and insurers continue to suffer from falling confidence.

Improved business volumes and the downward trend in costs helped overall profitability to recover. Securities houses expect this to continue, and banks are looking forward to the largest increase, while general insurers are bracing themselves for a further sharp decline. Although the survey showed a rise in business volumes in the last quarter of 1995, the level of business continued to be regarded as well below normal. "Domestic competition is now the most likely constraint on business prospects over the coming year, followed by the level of demand," the survey reported.

Average spreads narrowed at the sharpest rate yet recorded in the survey, indicating the competitive pressures. This trend is expected to continue.

While investment banking reports an increase in employment, the general trend remains one of investing in technology while reducing staff numbers. "Fierce competition is not going to disappear," said John Hayes, a senior member of Coopers & Lybrand's financial services consultancy practice. "There is a clear shift towards more technology in providing products and services. Investment in IT is expected to increase markedly over the coming year."

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1995/96 High	1995/96 Low	Yield (%)	Index	Close	Day's change
FT-SE 100	3662.70	+5.40	+0.1	3720.60	2954.20	3.92	Nikkei	15106	+100
FTSE 250	4021.60	-3.00	-0.1	4080.10	3300.90	3.70	Dow Jones	7140	+10
FTSE 350	1820.20	+1.80	+0.1	1848.50	1482.40	3.87			
FT Small Cap	1972.05	+2.73	+0.1	1993.11	1678.91	3.16			
FT All Share	1796.26	+1.84	+0.1	1821.21	1469.23	3.62			
New York	5048.84	-12.28	-0.2	5216.47	3832.06	2.38			
Hong Kong	20287.42	Closed		20689.03	14485.41	0.75			
Shanghai	10634.50	+94.49	+0.9	10834.50	6967.93	3.52			
Frankfurt	2359.05	+2.60	+0.1	2359.05	1910.96	1.88			

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	6.50	6.51	7.40	8.53	7.55	8.63			
US	5.50	5.19	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed			
Japan	0.34	0.72	Closed	4.64					
Germany	3.53	3.34	5.88	7.53	5.67				

BOND YIELDS									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	6.50	6.51	7.40	8.53	7.55	8.63			
US	5.50	5.19	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed			
Japan	0.34	0.72	Closed	4.64					
Germany	3.53	3.34	5.88	7.53	5.67				

MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
Index	Price	Change	Change (%)	Falls	Index	Price	Change	Change (%)	Falls
T & E	166	7	4.4		Gen Cable	155	11	6.6	
ML Laboratories	394	15	4.0		Nyrex Cables	95.5	4.5	4.5	
Wimpey(George)	141	5	3.7		Midlands Elec	326	12.4	3.6	

CURRENCIES									
Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday
\$ (London)	1.5457	-0.15c	1.5698	£ (London)	0.6470	+0.07	0.637	¥ (Tokyo)	149.8
\$ (New York)	1.5460	-0.05c	1.5698	£ (New York)	0.6468	+0.02	0.638	¥ (New York)	149.8
DM (London)	2.2358	+0.70c	2.3988	DM (New York)	2.2358	+0.58c	2.3988		
* (London)	162.802	+0.03	154.032	* (New York)	162.802	+0.12	154.032		
£ Index	83.4	+0.1	88.1	£ Index	83.4	+0.1	88.1		

OTHER INDICATORS									
Index	Yesterday	Day's change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday	Day's change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday
Oil Brent \$	17.47	+0.06	16.36	RPI	149.8	+3.1pc	2.6	18 Jan	
Gold \$	385.00	-4.2	377.6	GDP	106.5	2.1pc	4.3	22 Jan	
Gold £	256.54	-2.47	240.309	Base Rates	-6.50pc	5.25			



COMMENT

'Here's an heretical thought: maybe Kenneth Clarke has the electoral outlook on his mind - in particular the odds on an election this year rather than next, following Emma Nicholson's defection'

A moment of temptation for the Chancellor

The received wisdom in the City is that Kenneth Clarke will cut interest rates soon - although not tomorrow when he meets Eddie George in the first monthly monetary meeting of the year. But there's certainly more than an outside chance that the Chancellor will take a leaf out of the German Bundesbank's book and wrong-foot the market.

The official theology of interest rate decisions is that they are taken on the basis of the outlook for inflation two years hence. Provided that underlying inflation is set to come in below the effective target of 2.5 per cent, rates can be cut. We are asked to believe that political considerations, including any unseemly thoughts about the date of the election, are set on one side. Instead the augurers of inflation targeting in the Treasury and the Bank of England pore over the entrails of economic data between each monthly monetary meeting to see whether the new information has changed the outlook in two years' time.

Suspend your disbelief for a moment and take the doctrine at face value. What are the entrails telling the official soothsayers? In sum, since rates were cut on 13 December by a quarter-point, the stalling in the manufacturing economy has become even more serious, but there have been some green shoots of a revival in consumption. The question is which way this tug of forces will pull the economy in 1996.

We now know that manufacturing pro-

duction in the three months ending November was fractionally down on the previous three months - the first such decline for two years. Prospects are blighted not just by a big inventory overhang but by the seemingly inexorable slide of Germany and France into recession. With a quarter of visible exports going to these two key economies, manufacturers know better than most that no man is an island.

On the other hand, the CBI distributive trades survey reported last week that retailers had enjoyed their best Christmas for two years. There are signs that the housing recovery might be under way. The signals from monetary data are also set green.

The obvious thing to do in such circumstances is to wait and see. The outlook for inflation in two years' time will be so much clearer in a month. Chancellor. But here's an heretical thought: maybe Kenneth Clarke also has the electoral outlook on his mind - in particular the increased odds on an election this year rather than next, following Emma Nicholson's defection.

With the sands of the electoral hourglass running faster than he might have hoped, Mr Clarke has to make sure that a downwind from the manufacturing sector does not knock the consumer off his perch. A rash of lay-offs is just the reminder of job insecurity that could knock consumer confidence for six, so dashing Treasury expectations that consumers will save the day.

When Kenneth Clarke and Eddie George

meet, they will have not just the latest unemployment and earnings figures in front of them but also the retail price inflation and sales figures due to be released on Thursday. If these convey the message of continued success in the battle against inflation together with trouble on the jobs front, the temptation for Mr Clarke to grab his chance while he can and go the extra quarter-point now could prove too much for him to resist.

Bagging the carpetbaggers

Lottery culture rules. OK, and it's not just Camelot and scratch cards. It is the building societies too. The hordes chasing the easy money of building society conversion, or "carpetbaggers" as Woolwich has christened them, have become as much a feature of the 1990s as the Lottery queue. The whole thing is getting out of hand.

What to do about it? Safeguards were put into the 1986 building societies legislation, restricting cash handouts to members of more than two years' standing, but this was easily circumvented and does not cover share distributions. The original intention of the Act, to reduce destabilising flows of money between societies as they approached the conversion stage, simply did not work.

In practice, most societies have tackled the problem with a blunt instrument. They have upped their minimum deposits to limit the

number of new investors. Woolwich raised its minimum to £500 last summer and Alliance to £5,000 before Christmas. The drawback is that this gives clear confirmation that something is in the wind, and it loads the dice heavily in favour of more prosperous punters with the cash to put a few thousand into several societies at once.

A public company in such a position would have suspended its shares pending an announcement. Perhaps societies should take a leaf out of the Stock Exchange's book. They should be told to take action immediately there is a leak or strong speculation by announcing that all new accounts opened from that date are ineligible for a handout. If they change their minds and stay mutual, no harm is done, but if they do convert the carpetbaggers will have missed their chance.

Forte's eight codgers extract their premium

The Council of Forte and the quite out of proportion £50m it is to receive for its share stake in the beleaguered hotels group may seem like something of a side issue set against the cut-and-thrust of the main takeover battle but there are issues of importance here. Set up in the early 20th century to promote temperance, the council continues to exercise voting control over the company in which it owns less than 0.1 per cent of the capital, all vestige of its origi-

inal purpose having long since gone. Nor does the anachronistic nature of this bizarre little organisation stop there. The council even has its own "medical adviser", Dr Walter Somerville of 149 Harley Street. The eight old codgers who make up the council, however, are clearly nobody's fools. The premium they have extracted from Granada for "control" is a very substantial one.

Forte's spin doctors have tried to make this into something of a scandal for it appears that Granada first tried to persuade the council to sell its stake without restrictions, which would have enabled it to declare victory regardless of the view of other shareholders. Outrage! When you think about it, however, the scandal is really the other way round. It is absurd that the council could have been allowed to continue with its all-powerful position, eventually securing a price that, if distributed among other investors, would have been worth an extra 2p a share on the bid price.

Granada may have been a tough opponent when it launched its bid and its motives and reasoning may still leave a lot to be desired. But a company that can allow such a ridiculous anomaly as the Council of Forte to go unchallenged cannot deserve much sympathy. Likewise yesterday's deathbed repentance, Sir Rocco Forte's agreement to split his roles as chairman and chief executive, looks too little too late. City sentiment can move dramatically, but Forte's position looks increasingly desperate.

Direct Line takes the lead in comprehensive car insurance

NIC CICUTTI

Direct Line, the telephone-based insurer formed in 1985, now has the largest market share of the comprehensive motor insurance market, with 11.2 per cent of policies sold in the UK.

The insurer, whose market share rose from 4.8 per cent only four years ago to more than 2.2 million policyholders today, has grown mainly at the expense of big composite insurers, according to the most recent official figures.

The only two large insurers to have fought back and increased their market share are Eagle Star, up to 9.3 per cent from 7.1 per cent in 1992, and Norwich Union, which grew from 7.7 per cent to 8.1 per cent.

Both insurers are among those that reacted fastest to Direct Line's operation by cutting their own rates. They have also now launched their own telephone-based insurance businesses.

Datamonitor, a research and management consultancy, based its survey on returns filed by insurance companies with the Department of Trade and Industry at the end of 1994.

The report said: "[Direct Line's] phenomenal growth has been due to the development of a strong brand image and a policy of undercutting the prices of most of its closest rivals by leaving out the middleman - the broker."

Among companies that have lost business share are Royal General Accident, Sun Alliance, Guardian Royal Exchange, Commercial Union and Cornhill.

Churchill Insurance, a telephone insurer set up in opposition to Direct Line, was the only other company to grab a sizeable slice of the comprehensive insurance market.

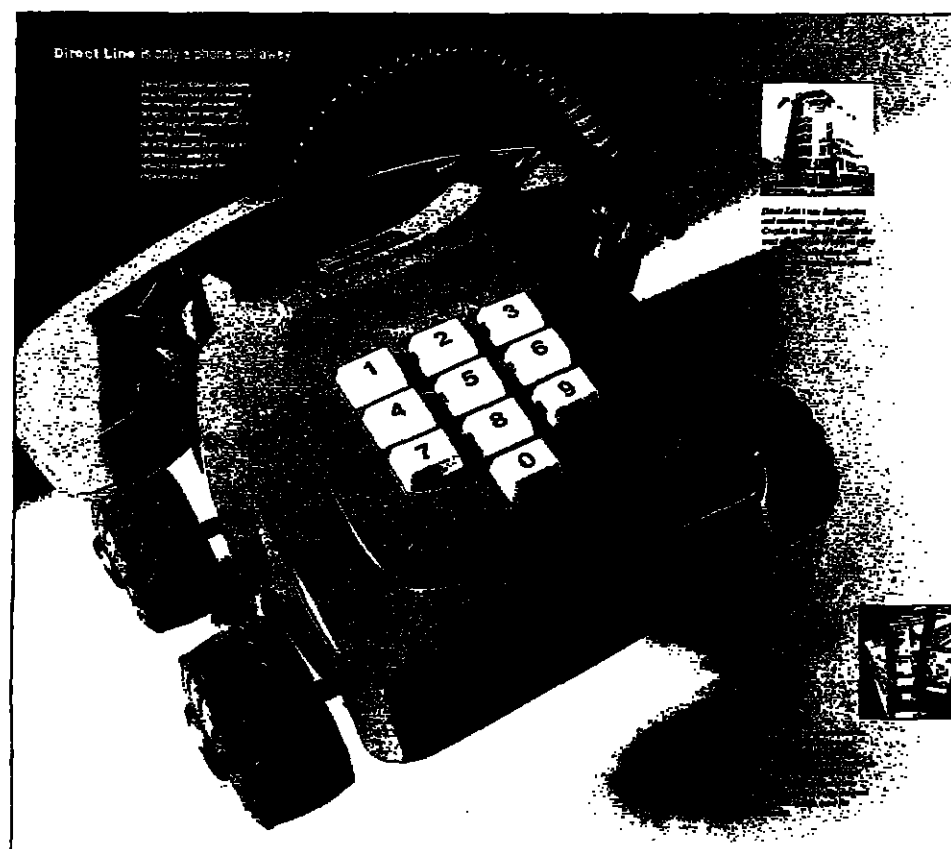
A Direct Line spokeswoman said yesterday that the company's latest information showed that its share had risen to the point where it was twice as large as the second-largest competitor in the market.

"One of the reasons that we have been able to build share so rapidly is that we are probably one of the cheapest insurance companies in the world. Our expenses are about 11 per cent, compared to an industry average of 25 per cent," she added.

Eagle Star said yesterday: "We were certainly one of the first traditional insurers to set up a direct service, Eagle Star Direct, in 1989. The customer comes to us from all areas, including brokers, but obviously, the direct market is of growing importance. It is a very competitive market and we are one of the most competitive in it."

Norwich Union launched its own telephone-based insurance service earlier this month.

However, Datamonitor also said that after several years of growth in the motor insurance market, the continuing slow-



Cutting out the middleman: Direct Line has benefited from comparatively low costs, claiming expenses of 11 per cent, compared with an industry average of 25

down in car sales will lead to a tail-off in policies sold.

"This lack of growth may in part be due to the slowing growth in the UK population which results in a stagnating car market," the report said.

At the same time, the gap between comprehensive and third-party motor insurance policies is shrinking in the wake of a decision three years ago by most of the industry to end old-style knock-for-knock agree-

ments governing claims. Until then, comprehensive policies subsidised third-party ones, leaving a price differential of about £100 between both types of insurance. This has now fallen to £65 or so.

£1.6bn North Sea oil field wins go-ahead

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

The Government has given the go-ahead for a £1.6bn oil field development in the North Sea, 150 miles east of Aberdeen. The so-called Etap project, which is a clutch of seven fields, is 53 per cent owned by BP, which will also act as the operator.

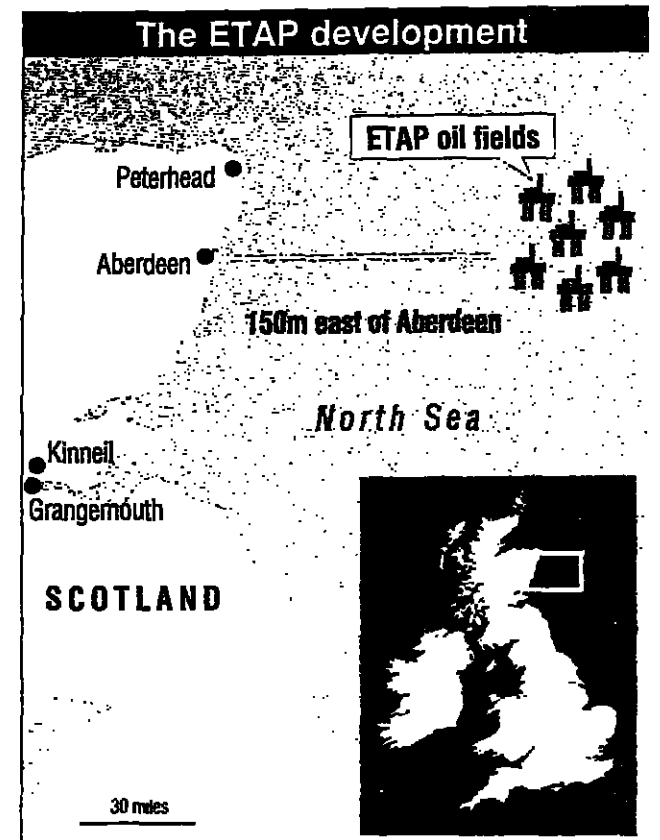
The project is a first in bringing together a number of fields and operators within a single development. A spokesman for BP said: "Not many, if any, of these would have gone ahead as single fields. This is a first in being done collectively."

Announcing the approval, Tim Eggar, minister for energy and industry, said UK companies had won all important fabrication work, and the domestic industry was expected to secure "a very high proportion" of the capital investment budget.

The Etap partners include Shell, Esso, Agip, Murphy, Broken Hill Proprietary and Mitsubishi Oil. A City analyst said: "To get oil companies to work together in this way is a miracle. It means that the industry is changing the way it thinks."

The oil sector has been forced to take a more co-operative approach because of the maturity of the North Sea and the cost of exploiting smaller or far-flung fields.

The fields in Etap are Marrook, Mungo, Monan, Machar, Heron, Egret and Skua. In aggregate, they have about 400 million barrels of oil, 35 million barrels of natural gas



liquids and more than a thousand billion cubic feet of gas.

The analyst said that the total combined reserves were probably more than each of the much-lauded new fields west of Shetland - Britannia and Schehallion. He said that, nevertheless, the £1.6bn cost of development was high and could mean that the partners were

also establishing infrastructure for further projects in the area.

The peak exports from Etap are expected to reach 210,000 barrels per day of oil and 350 million cubic feet of gas. Drilling will begin in the middle of the year with first production scheduled for the latter half of 1998. About 30 wells will be drilled.

Critical MPs want lower rates

DIANE COYLE
Economics Correspondent

New evidence yesterday that inflation is on the retreat boosted the prospect of another cut in interest rates. This could take place as early as tomorrow, after the first monetary meeting between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Governor of the Bank of England since the new year, and is widely expected within the next two months.

The favourable news on manufacturers' prices last month came on the same day that MPs on the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee expressed doubts whether the Treasury's Budget forecast of 3 per cent growth this year could be achieved without reductions in interest rates.

William Walegrave, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, defended the economic record. "There is more good news ahead," he promised, referring to last month's base rate cut. The MPs' report said the Bank of England's cautious policy stance "does not assist" its credibility. It said the Bank's views would be discounted if it

was consistently pessimistic about inflation.

The slippage in plans to bring public borrowing down to zero was the "biggest disappointment" about the Budget, the cross-party committee said. It also accused the Treasury of wishful thinking about the housing market, in predicting - for the second year running - a recovery in prices and sales.

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors yesterday reported an improvement in housing market activity in the final quarter of last year. Estate agents reported a more up-

beat mood among buyers and sellers. But Woolwich Building Society said the number of homeowners with negative equity, where their property is worth less than their mortgage, increased by 40,000 to an estimated 1.16 million in the last three months of 1995 compared with the previous three.

The increase was due to a 0.6 per cent fall in house prices between the two quarters. Woolwich added there were tentative signs the housing market might be beginning to improve.

Peter Robinson, group chief executive, said: "House prices are predicted to rise around 2 per cent, which should remove around 250,000 households from the negative equity trap."

Building societies are likely to reduce mortgage rates again even without the trigger of a fall in base rates, according to Robert Thomas, an analyst at investment bank UBS. "Building societies are coming under pressure to come up with better rates for customers. They are generating a lot of profits and have to start giving some of it back," he said.

Following recent statistics

showing that manufacturing output was flat in November, yesterday's figures brought favourable news on the inflation front.

The headline increases in both prices manufacturers paid for inputs of materials, up 1.6 per cent, and charged at the factory gate, up 0.8 per cent, were disappointingly high last month. But an upward blip in oil prices and higher excise duties imposed in the Budget explained most of these jumps.

The underlying news was much better. The year-on-year rate of increase in input prices fell to 5.8 per cent, its lowest for 18 months. The annual rate of "core" factory gate inflation, excluding food and energy, fell to 4.3 from 4.6 per cent in November. Retail price inflation tracks this core rate with a lag of six to nine months.

Although most City economists think an interest rate move is more likely in February or March, few will rule out a surprise early cut.

Data on retail and factory gate prices, earnings, unemployment and retail sales are due this week.

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IN BRIEF

BAA sets passengers record

BAA, the UK's biggest airports group, shrugged aside competition from the Channel Tunnel and a difficult package holiday market to announce a record 91.8 million passengers for 1995. The figures included a 7.4 per cent increase in December to 6.6 million.

BAA said all large markets recorded increases in December, with the strongest growth of 14.5 per cent on long-haul routes. North Atlantic traffic increased 11 per cent, while domestic traffic saw a rise of 8 per cent.

British Land completes Broadgate buy

British Land has completed the purchase of the 50 per cent of the Broadgate office development it does not already own for £121.3m. It has also paid back £701.5m of Broadgate Properties bank debt, leaving only a £98m facility outstanding on one of the development's buildings. British Land now owns the whole of the 2 million square foot site, worth just over £1bn.

Names awarded £175m compensation

Agents at Lloyd's of London were ordered by a judge to pay a first £175m tranche of compensation to names on the Feltrim insurance syndicates. Feltrim names won a ruling last March that their agents were liable for a large part of the £600m lost in the insurance market in the late Eighties and early Nineties. The ruling is the first on the size of compensation in respect of negligent underwriting on the 1987-1989 years of account.

Cash due from generator investors

Investors who bought shares in National Power and PowerGen in the second-round privatisation sale last March must pay the second instalments shortly. A reminder is being sent out today to 1.5 million investors, saying cheques must be received by the registrars by 1 February in time to be cleared by 6 February.

IG Index to offer forex dealing

IG Index, the City betting agency that caters for slickers gambling on everything from share and currency prices to parliamentary majorities, is spreading its wings into straightforward foreign exchange dealing. It will offer a service aimed at small to medium-sized companies looking to trade in amounts between \$100,000 and \$1m, or the equivalents, in 25 currencies.

Laura Ashley shake-up continues

Fashion chain Laura Ashley has appointed two new directors. Patricia Manning joins as marketing director and Deborah Baker as director of human resources.

Babcock wins £50m orders

Engineering group Babcock International has announced international contracts worth over £50m for its materials handling division. Orders worth a further £42m could be in the offing.

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THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

Tomkins opens Gates to growth

The market likes nothing more than a good reason to sell Tomkins, the guns-to-bread-to-lawnmowers conglomerate it admires but always from a suspicious distance.

Yesterday's half-year figures for the six months to October were as impressive as ever, continuing the relentless rise in earnings per share and dividends since 1984, but the shares closed 10p lower at 269p.

Although profits rose 10 per cent to £126.1m and the interim dividend was increased 11 per cent to 2.7p, the market had expected a touch more. After last year's outperformance of the market (following three years of stagnation) the temptation to take profits proved too much.

Worse, the "technical and highly complex" hitches to the final completion of the recently announced Gates acquisition gave investors the jitters.

Gates, a manufacturer of belts and hoses for the car industry, is widely viewed as the key to changing City sentiment on Tomkins, which has struggled to shake off scepticism about the 1992 acquisition of the baker RHM. The company has always claimed that RHM is nothing more complex than a manufacturing business and it has confounded the deal's harshest critics by unexpectedly pushing through two price rises in less than a year.

But investors, simple souls, are able to see that Gates is the sort of manufacturing business at which Tomkins excels and are therefore happier that Tomkins can make a profitable fist of running it.

The company is currently gagged by confidentiality clauses and so cannot say as much, but worries that the deal might not go ahead look way wide of the mark.

Once that concern is out of the way, attention will return to Tomkins's core businesses, which in the first half all registered increases in margins despite a patchy market in a number of sectors. There were downgrades to forecasts yesterday, but they were extremely modest.

As ever, the steady businesses such as plastic mouldings, conveyor systems and plumbing fittings allowed Tomkins to have problems in its US bicycle arm, for example, and still remain on the rails. They also provide the backing and cash flow for the company to be able to consider longer-term projects such as raising milling and baking margins to acceptable levels.

At 4.1 per cent there is still a way to go at the old RHM, but up from 3.3 per cent a year ago the return from bread is heading the right way.

On the basis of forecast profits of £330m this year and £369m next (with-

out any contribution from Gates), the shares stand on a prospective price-earnings ratio of only 12 - cheap for a company of this quality and, with the backing of a 4.5 per cent yield, the shares should have another good year.

Ten years' grind pays off for TI

The appointment to TI's board of Rudolf Mueller, the respected head of UK operations at UBS, confirms the coming of age of the scale-to-wheels engineering group. One of the highest-rated engineering stocks during the 1980s boom, its reputation slipped a bit in the early 1990s as its aggressive approach to accounting rules came under the microscope.

But unlike other acquisitive groups, which ran out of steam when the music stopped, the recession has only served to prove the soundness of the TI strategy. Sir Christopher Lewinton, the company's chairman and former chief executive, has spent the last 10 years building world-leading positions in three areas: John Crane for engineering seals, Bundy for small-diameter tubing for the car industry and Dowty Aerospace, the landing gear-to-propellers group acquired for £510m in 1992. The results have come through

strongly since profits before exceptional items bottomed at £105m in 1991. By 1994, the pre-tax figure had soared to £153m and NatWest Markets forecasts a further rise to £180m last year and £203m this time.

The omens are now positive for all the group's three areas. TI suffered a deal of indignation after the Dowty deal, but the £30.2m chalked up before interest in 1994 showed a reasonable return on an acquisition cost reduced by around £80m of disposals. The 50:50 joint venture with the Messier business of Snecma of France has created a world leader in undercarriage systems and there is scope for rationalisation improvements.

The recent huge potential order for 77 Boeing 777s for Singapore Airlines spells good news for Dowty as a supplier, as will any orders for Airbus if British Airways moves in the direction of the European plane-maker. Elsewhere, worries over US and European motor vehicle output, which accounts for much of the 35 per cent of group sales sold into automotive markets, look overdue. Both may now be at or near the bottom and TI has shown its ability in the past to add value to its tubes by supplying complete systems, rather than just the commodity product.

Finally, the 40 per cent of sales that go into heavy industrial process markets should do well at this late stage in the world economic cycle, while TI

is placing itself well by extending its reach in the Far East, where many of the projects are being sited. On a prospective p/e of 16 for this year, the shares, up 2p at 470p, stand on a well deserved premium rating. Hold.

Encouragement at Hillsdown

With Hillsdown Holdings' £121m deal to buy Hobson declared unconditional yesterday, attention now switches to the company's plans for its new acquisition and whether the company is turning the corner after a poor 1995.

On the first point, the Hobson deal looks encouraging for Hillsdown. It was achieved on a relatively attractive price and there are obvious potential synergies. Like Hillsdown, Hobson manufactures biscuits, sauces and ready-made meals, which are sold as own-label products to supermarkets. Hillsdown will be looking for cost savings in logistics, packaging and the purchase of raw materials.

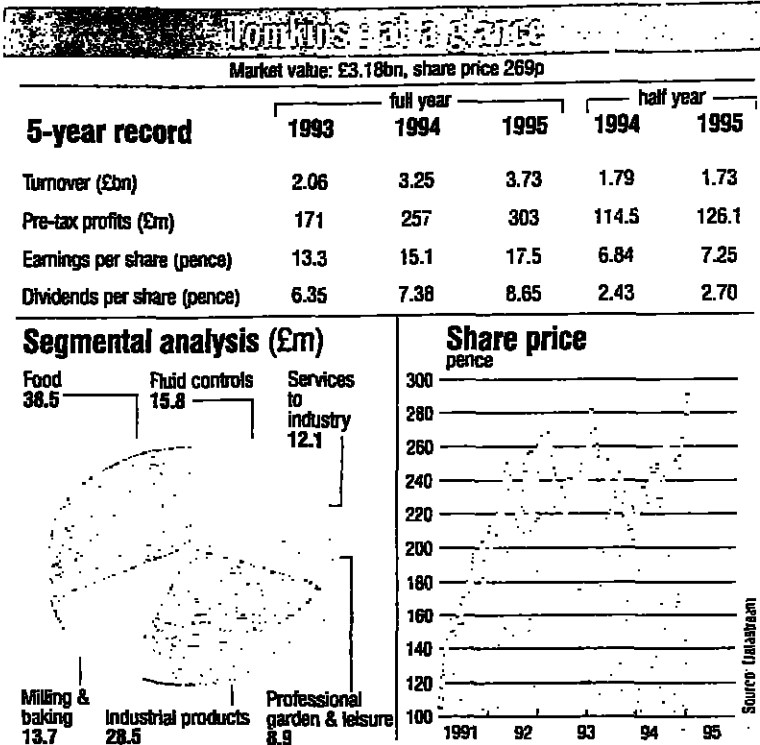
Hobson's London head office is likely to be closed and there may be further rationalisation in the factories, although nothing has been announced so far. Other parts, such as the wine and spirits, soft drinks and cereals business, look surplus to requirements and it would be no surprise if they were sold.

This is all good news but a recovery at Hillsdown still depends on a number of external factors that conspired against it last year. The company suffered more than most from the hot summer last year, which hit demand for Hillsdown's tea bags, hot drinks, biscuits and ready-made meals. On top of this, the continued rise in raw material prices wrecked the company's margins. After a good run earlier in the year the shares collapsed from an August high of 200p to 151p in December.

This year should be better. Barring a recurrence of another mercury-busting summer, demand should be back to normal and raw material pressures are now easing. The company is also likely to offload more of its peripheral businesses and its red meat operations are tipped for disposal soon.

One persistent problem, however, is supermarket pressure and Hillsdown is still finding it difficult to push price increases through.

BZW is forecasting £150m profits for the current year. With the shares unchanged yesterday at 174p, that puts them on a forward rating of 10. Food manufacturing may not be the most exciting sector at the moment but at these levels Hillsdown looks good value.



Simon Pincombe CITY DIARY

Eurotunnel chief rails against the train-makers

The Year of Our Lord 1996 finds Sir Alastair Morton in vintage form. Whatever new year resolutions were made by the irascible chairman of Eurotunnel, a vow to be less confrontational was not among them. Speaking yesterday at Fleming's conference on European High-Speed Railways, Sir Alastair branded Britain as "the laughable tail-end Charlie" and took the opportunity to lambast the performance of industry suppliers.

"We can't even say GEC Alsthom's Eurostars handle the upgraded Kent line satisfactorily," barked Sir Alastair, "while Brush's new Class 92 locomotives are in all kinds of conflict with signalling and other electronics." The Eurotunnel boss is keen that neither the manufacturers nor "what was BR" escape blame for what he reckons is a lamentable performance in Britain generally and toward Eurotunnel in particular.

"Our view of Breda Fiat as a supplier is completely unprintable," railed the tunnel operator. "Our view of Brush is charitable on good days but not on bad days."

Come on now. Don't beat about the bush Sir Alastair.

Desperate to raise £3.1m in private money to fund his new theatre (the condition for unlocking an award of £30m from the National Lottery) Sadler's Wells yesterday resorted to the time-honoured technique of going cap in hand to the City. Having raised £1.4m from existing supporters the theatre still needs another £6.7m and has responded with the launch of a "bold fund-raising initiative" - a theatrical euphemism for tapping corporate Britain in return for the "rare opportunity" to name a seat in the new theatre.

Leafing through the December issue of *Forbes* in a dentist's waiting room, one's eyes are drawn inexorably to unpalatable photographs of balding heads and distended



Minions on Sir Lawrie Barratt's Yorkshire estate were amused to see Camilla Parker Bowles (above) smoking furiously in the car park of the Feversham Arms on the weekend. Riding with the Farndale hunt, the royal mistress did not look as if she was enjoying her spell on the householder's spectacularly beautiful land. Possibly down to a noticeable police presence.

organs. The magazine is concerned that the American businessman has gone into plastic surgery in a very big way, pointing out that men accounted for one quarter of the one million plastic surgery operations in the US last year - up from virtually nothing ten years ago. Most male patients are businessmen between the ages of 40 and 60, it concludes.

Hair transplants aside, the ageing businessman is most concerned about his wrinkled eyes. "His eyes are what he uses to meet his clients every day," says Dr William Riley, a Houston plastic surgeon. At \$8,000 for a face lift (\$1,700 for a pot belly) none of this is cheap. But all pales into insignificance compared with the cost of a hair transplant.

Dr Melvin Mayer, a 46-

year-old doctor from San Diego, was voted the baldest man at his twentieth High School reunion. So he spent \$40,000 on a new head of hair. Clearly impressed by the earnings growth potential he went into the business. Now he owns 15 clinics performing 200 transplants a month.

Much like Victor Kiam and his razors. Only in reverse.

The synergies might not be immediately apparent but IG Index, the spread betting specialist, is to offer a foreign exchange dealing service. Aimed at the smaller business it will feature some 25 currencies with a dealing minimum of \$100,000. Now you can buy dollars as part of a hedging strategy and still lose the lot on a punt on the next Tory majority.

Fear of recession stalks Europe

The mood of the European economy has suddenly shifted. In the space of a couple of weeks it has moved from nagging concern about slower growth into real fear: fear that recession has returned.

In fact the reality has not changed, for prospects for growth this year in the two largest Continental European markets, Germany and France, have been weak for some time. But there has been a shift in perception, highlighted by figures last week showing sharply rising unemployment in Germany (in December only a whisker below 10 per cent), an estimate that the German budget deficit last year was 3.6 per cent of GDP, not the 3 per cent previously expected, and reports of a forthcoming forecast of very slow growth in France. Now the string of gloomy news has become quite relentless, for just about every day some new story emerges of a downgraded forecast or poor actual figures.

The new thing this week, though, is some defensive statement by an official or politician. Yesterday's crop included an assurance by Michel Camdessus, the French managing director of the International Monetary Fund, that "there is no particular reason to panic" over Germany's fiscal deficit figures, and the Italian minister Susanna



ECONOMIC VIEW

HAMISH McRAE

Agnelli's view that the Maastricht criteria should only be met if it is possible without social upheaval. "We cannot face more unemployment," she said. But perhaps the most significant of the defensive statements came from the French Labour Minister, Jacques Barrot. He seemed to be paving the way for downgrading the forecast for French growth by explaining

The spectre of stagnation could come to haunt Europe if Germany makes the same mistake as Japan

that, though in the past growth in the 1 to 2 per cent region would have led to a sharp fall in employment, government measures should reduce its impact. "Even if growth is insufficient to create the new jobs we need," he said, "we should be able to put a brake on a rise in unemployment this year."

At the moment the official French growth forecast for this

year is 2.8 per cent. A leak from the ministry of finance suggests that it will more likely be 1.3 to 1.7 per cent. This will naturally make the fiscal position for 1996 even worse, and if a report in yesterday's *Le Monde* proves correct, the government is already massaging the public finances for 1995 by adding in some tax revenue received in the first few days of

1996 and pushing some spending from last year into this one. The cumulative effect of this stream of information is twofold: political and economic. From a political point of view it is beginning to look as though neither France nor Germany will, by 1997, meet the key Maastricht criterion for a European currency: a fiscal deficit of less than 3 per cent of GDP.

In addition, Germany is perilously close to the 60 per cent of GDP limit for total public debt and a year of very slow growth could nudge it above that. There are even suggestions that such a failure to qualify will be welcomed, if not in Bonn, certainly in Frankfurt, where the financial community has the gravest doubts about the wisdom of the whole currency plan.

But the political fallout from the inability to meet the Maastricht criteria is in the future. It is like a devaluation. Until it happens the official world not only ignores the possibility; it denies that the possibility exists. We are not yet at crunch time.

We are much closer to crunch time on economics. Either the Continental economy is going to fall off a cliff, or interest rates will.

If looking at the US gives the best feel for the behaviour of the British economy, so looking at Japan should give the best feel for the behaviour of France and Germany. Like the US, the

UK has experienced low inflation and decent-ish growth. But this has been associated with a high sense of job insecurity and insufficient confidence in recovery - insufficient, that was, to ensure the re-election of the incumbent.

Now there is a real possibility that Germany and France will experience a first half of this year where there is no growth at all, maybe even decline. Japan has experienced three years of bouncing along the bottom, not technically in recession, but not growing either. True, both Germany and France experienced sharp growth in the second half of 1994 and the first half of last year, but now the spectre of stagnation could come to haunt much of Continental Europe. It will come in particular if Germany and France (and actually that really just means Germany) make the same mistake as Japan and do not ease monetary policy quickly enough.

The markets do expect German interest rates to fall this spring, and there have even been suggestions that the Bundesbank Council meeting this week could cut them. On balance that seems unlikely, though some individual council members have been hinting in this direction. But what we are talking about here is not the modest easing of short-term rates and the modest further falls in bond yields which the markets expect. There is a real danger of a vicious circle establishing itself, with rising unemployment leading to cuts in consumption which will lead to further unemployment, which will in turn cut consumption still further.

Of course all economies are ultimately self-correcting: in any case the Bundesbank is immensely competent and once assured of the dangers would drive down interest rates. Eventually lower interest rates would prevail and recovery would be restored. But we could wait most of this year before that happened.

Maybe that point above could be rephrased: if interest rates do not fall fast, the fading Continental economy will pull them down. Either way, the market seems likely to be surprised by a plunge in rates, just as the politicians have been surprised by the plunge in growth. Remember as they trot out that each new item of gloom on the economic front shouts "expect lower interest rates".

Hotel Breaks with THE INDEPENDENT

Two nights for the price of one



We would like to invite you to take a short break in the country at a top-class, owner run hotel and stay two nights for the price of one. Simply pay for one night's bed and breakfast and you will get the next night, including breakfast, free. Rates are based on a double room.

All the participating hotels are part of the Minotel consortium and many will allow you to enjoy a longer stay on the same basis: pay for two nights and stay for four, for example. You can check this with your chosen hotel when you make your initial reservation.

There are more than 100 Minotel hotels participating in this offer and they are located throughout England, Wales and Scotland. All hotels offer top-class comfort and pride themselves on providing a personal service that many larger establishments

cannot match. In tomorrow's *Independent* we will print a list of all the participating Minotel hotels with a brief description of each.

To qualify for your 2 For 1 break, you must collect FOUR differently numbered tokens from the seven we are printing and attach them to a voucher which we will print in Saturday's edition of *The Independent* with details on how to book. Today we print 3 tokens.

Today we have pictured the Bryn Tirion Hotel in Anglesey. Noted for its fine food and wine, this intimate hotel has excellent views across Red Wharf Bay. A double room for one night costs £64.

We will feature another hotel tomorrow in *The Independent* and give you a fourth token.

Pictured is Bryn Tirion Hotel, Wales

- TERMS AND CONDITIONS**
- To participate in our 2 For 1 offer you must collect 4 differently numbered tokens and attach them to a voucher which will be printed on the final day of the offer, Saturday 20 January along with a confirmation booking form.
 - The voucher may be redeemed at any participating Minotel hotel featured in *The Independent's* directory (printed on Wednesday 17 January) for one free night's bed and breakfast for two people in a standard twin or double bedded room when a second night's bed and breakfast is pre-purchased at the tariff indicated. All prices shown are per room per night.
 - Some hotels, at the proprietors' discretion, will accept the voucher for longer stays on the same 2 For 1 basis, so you can stay for 4 nights for the price of 2 for example. Please check with your chosen hotel when making your booking.
 - The voucher does not cover payment for any other meals or service that may be requested by the holder and cannot be used with any other offer, saving or discount that may be available at the hotel.
 - One child, under the age of 12 years at the time of booking and sharing a room with two adults will be accommodated free of charge but all meals, including breakfast, will be chargeable.
 - The descriptions and prices contained in this offer have been supplied by participating hotels. While every effort has been made to ensure their accuracy prior to publication, no responsibility can be taken by Newsweek Publishing plc, Charterhouse Promotions or Minotel for any error, omissions or changes that may take place afterwards without notice. You are therefore advised to check all relevant details with your chosen hotel prior to making a reservation. No bookings will be accepted for Bank Holiday periods.
 - All bookings must be made no more than six weeks in advance of your proposed date of arrival.
 - Vouchers are valid until 31 May 1996.
 - Vouchers must be surrendered on arrival at the hotel and can be used on one occasion only.
 - Photocopies of tokens and the voucher are not acceptable.

For queues call Minotels on 01253 292000 or Charterhouse Promotions on 0116 2477740.



THE OMEGA SETS THE STANDARD BY WHICH ALL EXECUTIVE CARS MUST BE JUDGED

THE OMEGA FROM VAUXHALL

Banks feel the benefit of interest rate expectations

MARKET REPORT

JOHN SHEPHERD

The market moved forward tentatively yesterday, led by a general hope of further cuts soon in interest rates across Europe. The Chancellor and the Governor of the Bank of England are due to hold their monthly meeting tomorrow, but the consensus among dealers is that another reduction in UK rates is unlikely to precede a move by the Bundesbank.

Most of the hopes of lower borrowing costs were reflected in the gilts market, where longer-dated issues advanced by around half a point.

Fresh UK economic data showing the lowest rate of inflation for 18 months in input prices and lower factory gate price rises helped to bolster the belief that interest rates would soon fall.

Leading shares traded in positive territory throughout the session, although prices started to retreat towards the

close due to a lackluster opening on Wall Street, where many traders stayed at home, taking advantage of Martin Luther King Day.

The FT-SE 100 closed 5.4 points higher at 3,662.7, after having reached 3,668.8 just before lunch. Volume trading figures were nothing much to write home about, with 589 million shares changing hands.

Bank shares were the main beneficiary of the expectations of a fresh round of cuts in interest rates. Abbey National added 7.5p to 645p, National Westminster firmed 2p to 637p, and Lloyds TSB rose 8p to 317p.

Concerns about possible strike action clipped 3p off Royal Bank of Scotland to 542p. More than 2,000 members of the Bifu union at 50 branches are voting on whether to take action over a wage dispute.



ers recorded double-digit gains. Allied Domecq almost joined the select band, finishing the session 9p higher at 543p as Credit Lyonnais Laing penned the stock's name to its selected buy list for this year.

The sale of Allied's interest in Carlsberg Tetteley, the brewing venture jointly owned with Carlsberg of Denmark, is still awaited by a market anxious for the company to reduce in size and concentrate on retailing and spirits.

Bass, tipped as a possible buyer of the Tetley side of the business, advanced 13p to 716p. **Whitbread**, also said to be in the bidding queue and rumoured to be close to selling

Among the most noticeable fallers in the top flight was **WH**

Smith, dropping 7p to 404p amid some worries about the results announcement next week – in particular the trading performance of the Do It All chain of DIY sheds jointly owned with Boots.

Boots last week said sales at the sheds were declining, and analysts believe there is still too much over-capacity in the market despite numerous closures in the last couple of years.

Further light will also be cast on the DIY market next week by trading updates from Sainsbury, owner of the Homebase

chain, and **Kingfisher**, which runs the B&Q outlets.

Kingfisher lost 7p to 524p, but Sainsbury advanced 11p to 415p as investors started to warm to last week's management changes.

The retailing tiddler Clinton Cards enjoyed a good session, closing 4p better at 124p on gossip of record sales of Christmas cards.

Generally, the day's trading was kept subdued by an absence of corporate announcements. Tomkins was the only major company to release results, which were below expectations. A lack of fresh news about the technical hitches holding up Tomkins' \$1bn-plus acquisition of Gates also hit the shares, which closed 10p down at 269p.

Cable & Wireless shares were out of favour despite the extraordinary shareholders meeting clearing the path for the company appoint a non-

British subject to the vacant chief executive's chair. The price lost 7p to 453p, principally due to fading hopes of a break-up of C&W.

Elsewhere, Arjo Wiggins put on 3p to 185p after putting flesh on the bones of its previously announced £100m restructuring programme. Almost 700 jobs will be lost right across the company's paper operations

Forte suffered another blow in its fight for survival against **Granada**, and the wound was self-inflicted. Forte lost 3p to 366p, while Granada climbed 7p to 670p.

Sir Rocco Forte's decision to split the roles of chairman and chief executive fell short of what investors had been expecting. He intends, all things being well, to remain as chief executive and hand over the chairman's reins to Sir Anthony Tennant, currently deputy chairman.

☐ The speculative takeover spotlight fell firmly on World of Leather yesterday. The shares climbed 6p to 70p with several dealers predicting that a bid for the group may be mounted before the end of the week. Rumoured favourites to mount a strike are DFS Furniture, headed by Graham Kirkham, and Carpetright, led by Sir Phil Harris.

□TINY BCE Holdings was one of the session's most actively traded shares as the company announced plans to sell its non-core arcades and snooker businesses, to concentrate on its computer games business. Durlacher, broker to BCE, placed an issue of 10 million new shares with several institutional clients at 20.75p. The price closed 0.25p up at 23p. Robin Jones and Barry Adams also resigned as directors, and sold 3 million shares.

DATA BANK

FT-SE 100	
3226.7	+5.4
FT-SE 250	
4021.6	-3.0
FT-SE 350	
1820.2	+1.8
SEAQ VOLUME	
589.3m shares,	
30,956 bargains	
Gifts Index	
95.6	+14

SHARE SPOTLIGHT

share price, pence

Wm Smith

Month	Share Price (pence)
July	10
August	15
September	12
October	18
November	15
December	25
January	20

Source: Datastream

[illegible]

Exchange Rates

Foreign Exchange				DOLLAR				D-MARK	
STERLING		1 month 3 months		Spot 1 month 3 months		Spot 1 month 3 months		Spot	
Country	Spot								
US	2547	15-11	35-32	1000	—	—	—	—	0893
Canada	2369	13-47	33-27	13836	0-3	0-5	—	—	1020
France	2139	65-36	53-14	14486	22-21	22-21	—	—	3472
Germany	2619	65-36	53-14	4591	37-37	37-38	—	—	10810
Italy	2632	77-22	23-23	1378	57-72	103-10	—	—	12722
Japan	1260	66-81	37-23	1278	2-4	5-8	—	—	15436
UK	4932	49-32	49-32	10520	57-57	57-59	—	—	35857
Belgium	2656	35-55	33-94	1596	35-35	35-35	—	—	1786
Denmark	2504	63-63	70-76	1596	4-5	8-10	—	—	40439
Netherlands	9930	12-2	35-31	63455	35-10	30-40	—	—	40866
Norway	9930	22-75	35-51	2173	37-42	103-10	—	—	40866
Sweden	1813	10-18	32-22	65971	55-55	55-55	—	—	45565
Switzerland	1501	76-70	29-204	1684	32-31	101-11	—	—	00026
Australia	2692	9-21	42-81	17755	2-2	15-35	—	—	16003
Hong Kong	1650	87-55	35-35	25620	4-12	65-80	—	—	1770
Malaysia	2692	9-21	42-81	17755	2-2	15-35	—	—	5446
New Zealand	2537	22-37	67-12	15710	30-38	103-10	—	—	23305
Singapore	1650	87-55	35-35	25620	4-12	65-80	—	—	1770
Sri Lanka	5769	0-0	0-0	15710	30-38	103-10	—	—	23305

Country	Starling	Dollar	Country	Starling	Dollar
Argentina	15,659	10,000	Nigeria	33,720	85,000
Australia	15,725	10,752	Oman	13,992	3,280
Brazil	9,522	10,752	Pakistan	10,942	342,25
Canada	12,848	8,000	Philippines	10,549	25,750
France	5,371	34,406	Portugal	23,577	14,000
Germany	6,776	4,500	Russia	6,630	16,400
Greece	22,55	10,000	Saudi Arabia	72,855	497,100
India	36,738	237,400	Spain	42,523	35,874
Japan	55,970	35,820	Taiwan	15,793	27,700
Kenya	19,920	10,000	U.S.A.	5,000	36,732

Tourist Rates

C Buys	C Buys	C Buys	
Australia (Dollars)	2,200	New Zealand (Dollars)	2,200
Austria (Schillings)	15,500	Germany (Dollars)	\$570
Belgium (Francs)	44,000	Portugal (Cruzeiros)	20,000
Canada (Dollars)	2,050	Spain (Pesetas)	\$500
Cyprus (Pounds)	10,850	Sweden (Kronor)	50,000
Denmark (Crown)	8,400	Italy (Lira)	1,700
Holland (Gulden)	2,400	Japan (Yen)	60,000

UK Base	8.50%	Germany Lombard	300%	US Prime	8.75%	Japan Discount	6.50%
France Intervention	4.0%	Canada Prime	5.0%	Discount Fed Funds	5.25%	Belgium Discount	3.00%
Spain Discount	9.00%	Denmark	5.75%	10-Day Repo	8.25%	Switzerland Discount	2.75%

Bond Yields

Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %	Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %
UK	6%	6.78	8 1/4%	7.61	Netherlands	6%	4.59	6 1/2%	5.67
US	5 1/4%	5.63	5 3/4%	6.73	Spain	7 1/2%	8.05	8 1/2%	9.41
Japan	5 1/4%	1.90	4 1/4%	2.59	Italy	9 7/8%	10.14	10 1/2%	10.55
Australia	7%	7.22	7 1/2%	8.27	Belgium	7 1/4%	5.58	8 1/4%	8.43
Germany	5 1/4%	4.53	6 1/4%	5.98	Sweden	7%	7.48	8%	8.01
France	7%	5.59	7 1/2%	6.50	ECU Unit	9 1/4%	5.83	7 1/4%	6.78

Money Market Rates

	O/Night	7 Day	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8
Starting CDs	-	-	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8
Local Authority Caps	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8
Discount Market Caps	-	-	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8
Treasury Bills (Buy)	-	-	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8	6 5/8
Dollar Cds	-	-	5.98	5.98	5.98	5.98
ECU Linked Dep	-	-	5.98	5.98	5.98	5.98

Contract	Settlement price	High/Low for day	Est.Cmts traded	Open interest
Long GR (Mar 98)	111-42	111-32	2972	2972
Long S&P (Mar 98)	100-50	100-35	2549	26229
U.S. Bond (Mar 98)	103-34	103-24	11932	1294
U.S. Treasury (Mar 98)	103-13	103-07	10307	5629
3M's Stealing (Mar 98)	93-74	93-75	1264	10690
3M Euro (Jun 98)	94-62	93-94	9830	6335
3M Euro (Mar 98)	95-25	95-17	1050	28230
3M Euro (Jun 98)	94-73	94-72	14707	14707
E.C.U. (Mar 98)	95-49	95-19	95-17	759
E.C.U. (Jun 98)	95-37	95-37	95-37	2484
Euro SFR (Mar 98)	96-32	96-34	96-29	268
FTSE-100 (Mar 98)	3664	3668.0	3675.0	6045
FTSE-100 (Jun 98)	4050.0			347
Euro (Mar 98)	90-22	90-24	5000	4076
Euro (Jun 98)	90-22	90-24	5000	4557

Life FT-SE Index Option				
Settlement price: 3682.0	closing offer price			Call/Put Total/Yield
Series	3600 -	3850	3700	3750
January	74/2	29/11	5/40	1/87
February	101/23	66/38	39/62	29/96
March	125/43	93/61	65/84	41/113
April	127/66	307/6	30/34	50/127

Commodities

INDUSTRIAL METALS - London Metal Exchange				LME Stocks	
Month	HG	Alloy	Cash	3 mths	Volume
Aluminum	1000-10	1400-45	2027-08	1040-85	129200
Copper	2845-85	3461-85	2394	35200	+ 620
Nickel	887-25	1069-50	10650	35007-5	+ 1050
Zinc	7075-80	7385-80	1175	4247	- 50
Lead	6200-80	6316	326	1445	- 220
Steel	1071-12	1033-15	22091	62675-5	3550

PRECIOUS METALS				Stock volumes & changes in inventories as of Friday 15 January	
per oz	per 100g	\$	£	Stock	Inventories
Gold	422.76	26275	£1614	355	50
Silver	542	321	£1614	25	10
Palladium	3650.0	242.5	£1614	25	10
Platinum	1000-10	1400-45	2027-08	1040-85	129200
Copper	2845-85	3461-85	2394	35200	+ 620
Nickel	887-25	1069-50	10650	35007-5	+ 1050
Zinc	7075-80	7385-80	1175	4247	- 50
Lead	6200-80	6316	326	1445	- 220
Steel	1071-12	1033-15	22091	62675-5	3550

Coops	Colias	Barley	Potatoes	Potatoes	
LOE	LOE	LOE	LOE	LOE	GA/1000
May	882	Jan	1930	2020	283
Jun	908	Feb	1930	2030	275
Jul	938	Mar	1920	2030	286
Aug	1,488	Apr	8	245	1,008
White Sugar	New Sugar	Fruit	LOE	Corn	100 New Cases
May	3648	May	1030	Jan	1930
Jun	3670	Jun	1133	Feb	1930
Jul	3334	Jul	1151	Mar	1930
Aug	312	Aug	1258	Apr	1930
Other Sols (Alcohol)					100 New Cases

[illegible]

COMMODITY INDICES							
"GSCI" indices	Base date	+Spot	%Chg	Dec 31st	%Yr-to-dtg	Year ago	% Yr chg
Agricul	1970=100	200.5	-2.00	302.02	-1.59	175.82	+8.27
Industrial	1970=100	299.88	+1.24	277.22	-0.71	248.34	+14.00
Energy	1970=100	53.89	-0.88	56.00	-0.88	38.23	+42.55
Unmetl Metals	1977=100	182.71	-0.85	153.69	-2.67	222.48	-29.78
Unmetl	1970=100	179.03	-0.04	154.51	-2.96	151.74	-7.76
Precious Metals	1973=100	593.35	-0.27	463.81	+2.25	480.25	+4.07

Source: Goldman Sachs & Co. "GSCI is a trademark and service mark of Goldman Sachs & Co." [Closes as of Jan 30]

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sport

If Carling reads between the lines of what Rowell has been saying from the South Africa game onwards, he must be a worried man

This is the best week of the rugby year – the few days leading up to the Five Nations. After all, it is not of clubs that grown men in pubs and dens can get away with a breathless discussion about the shape of Paul Grayson's thighs, is it?

Along with the new stand-off's upper legs (are they chunky enough for the demands of international rugby?), we have the questions of Matthew Dawson's wrists (strong enough for a quicker service than Kyran Bracken?) and Rory Underwood's heart ('is it still in the game?')

But this year, instead of wondering only which players will go through the routine of slaughtering the rest of Europe, the England supporter has a couple of extra problems to chew over – he (or she) is

in a state of utter confusion about his team, and he is not used to it.

It seems such a long time since he has felt like this (actually it is only about eight years) that it is raising the ghosts of the bad old days – the ones when David Duckham would wait a whole season for a single pass, and when no Englishman could look a Welshman calmly in the eye.

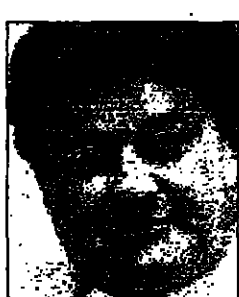
Here we are, five days from going to the awesome Parc des Princes to play a French side who have just stood toe-to-toe with the All Blacks and we have a new back row, two virtual novices at half-back, another at hooker, the best scrumrunner playing out of position and total mystery about what England are going to do with the ball – at least we do know that the Martins Bayfield and Johnson will win it. It is not, you may be

sure, the preparation which has served so well in Paris in recent years.

There are two questions this raises – has Jack Rowell gone completely potty? And, despite those years of unprecedented glory, is Will Carling the right man to take and execute tactical decisions on the field?

Rowell's defence is relatively straightforward. He says that he inherited a settled, if slightly ageing, England side less than two years before a World Cup, made the pragmatic decision to keep it together for the World Cup campaign, and as a result was not able to effect the changes he wanted at the pace he wanted – he has had to do it all at once. Which is perfect common sense, and would be fine if it were the whole story.

It is, however, absolutely not just



HUGH BATESON on rugby

tification for saying one day Mike Catt was the stand-off he wanted to structure England's game (pre South Africa) and the next saying he had been completely wrong and that Grayson was the answer. And it is

no justification for saying that England needed a genuine open-side in Andy Robinson one day (pre South Africa), and going back on that with a new-boy in the position in Lawrence Dallaglio the next. All that shilly-shallying does is betray an uncertainty of judgement in the first place.

That uncertainty has, naturally, worried its way on to the pitch where England appeared hesitant, inept and directionless in their autumn games. Their ability to run the ball from the wrong places into the wrong places, particularly against Western Samoa, was truly shocking and the captain has to take some responsibility.

If Carling has been happy with the way the midfield (his area of operation and expertise, remember) has

been continually clogged up with back-row forwards slowing the ball down, then he does not have the necessary vision for the job. If he has not been, and either did not or could not prevent it, then he is not carrying the necessary clout. The same applies to the pace with which the ball is recycled, and the obsession with taking it into tackles rather than keeping it alive.

Poor Carling, he must have hoped that the dredging of his relationships through public scrutiny had just about come to an end. But my guess is that if England again look anaemic on Saturday he will have to go through it all once more as his relationship both with Rowell and with his players will become one of the themes of the season.

If Carling reads between the lines

of what Rowell has been saying from the South Africa game onwards, he must be a worried man. All that talk of players' responsibilities, the difference between what is happening in training and in a match, about who should be running the game on the pitch – it is hardly a vote of confidence in the captain, is it?

It is not as if there is no alternative, either in position or character. Phil de Glanville plays the sort of instinctive rugby England should aspire to day-in, day-out alongside Jeremy Guscott, and with John Hall, has been instrumental in persuading Bath not just to adopt, but actively to embrace it. The contrast is not a comforting one, even for England's most successful captain of all time.

Alan Watkins is on holiday

FIVE NATIONS COUNTDOWN: England's search for long-term success could be undermined by a thirst for victory, says Steve Bale

French to provide the acid test

It has become commonplace at this time of the year to demote the worth of the Five Nations' Championship because of its World Cup context but, as those of us enamoured of this annual imbroglio keep saying, the great contest of the home countries and France has more, not less, significance because of the quadrennial rugbyfest.

Yes, we all know that England and the rest would benefit from, and therefore need, greater exposure to the different rigours of confronting the game's southern-hemisphere giants, and it can certainly be persuasively argued that the championship alone is inadequate. On the other hand, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa have now set up their own version so we up at this end of the world must have been doing something right.

But however much you argue that, being immediately post-World Cup, the 1996 Five Nations which commences on Saturday is the start of the road to the next, at the same time it stands alone as it does every year as the sporting event that brightens our winter and fills every one of our international stadiums. The 10-game championship begins with France v England in Paris and Scotland v Ireland in Dublin

and by the time it ends on 16 March more than 600,000 people will have watched.

What with all the stuff we constantly hear about rugby union's ABC1 viewers, is it any

1996 Five Nations fixtures
20 Jan France v England (Parc des Princes); Ireland v Scotland (Lansdowne Road); 3 Feb England v Wales (Twickenham); Scotland v France (Murrayfield); 17 Feb France v Ireland (Parc des Princes); Wales v Scotland (Cardiff Arms Park); 2 Mar Ireland v Wales (Lansdowne Road); Scotland v England (Murrayfield); 18 Mar England v Ireland (Twickenham); Wales v France (Cardiff Arms Park).

1995 final table

	P	W	L	F	A	Pts
England	4	4	0	98	39	8
Scotland	4	3	1	87	71	6
France	4	2	2	77	70	4
Ireland	4	1	3	44	83	2
Wales	4	0	4	43	86	0

1996 matches: 20 Jan France 21 Wales; 8 Feb Ireland 20-4 France; 10 Feb England 10-10 Scotland; 10 Feb Ireland 13-18 France; 21 Feb France 21 Scotland; 22 Feb Wales 9 England 23; 4 Mar Ireland 7 France 26; Scotland 26 Wales 13; 18 Mar England 24 Scotland 12; Wales 12 Ireland 16.

wonder that Sky – whose proprietor, Rupert Murdoch, is already forking out £36m over 10 years for southern-hemisphere rugby – should be prepared to pay undreamed-of sums for the Five Nations television rights? The ante, so we are told, was recently upped from £175m to £250m. The last contract went for less than £30m, and that was a record.

At a time when rugby institutions need all the funds they can get to finance the new professionalism which was so un-

popular with the English rank and file at Sunday's chaotic Rugby Football Union general meeting in Birmingham, this is an irresistibly attractive offer. The RFU, by the way, has said it will insist on a territorial element in any new contract.

For now, though, the BBC carries on as it has since the year dot, and if the rugby is not always as good as programme producers might desire, the sense of occasion and history – which rival entrepreneurs such as Ross Turnbull would lose for ever – will be undiminished. As Will Carling, the England captain during eight championships, once put it, the Five Nations "has a magic and intensity all of its own and unless you have played in it or watched it you don't understand".

This is an implicit rebuke for Antipodeans and others who have tried to rubbish what goes on from January to March, though we can be sure the rest of the rugby world will be far from Carling's mind come Saturday. It will have to be. It will be the fascination of this game and the international season that follows to see whether Carling's leadership can do anything to inspire the unusual number of younger players in his team.

Given that he was always previously surrounded by senior – in many cases more senior than him – lieutenants, this seizure of responsibility can be seen as the greatest challenge of his entire captaincy, and if he fails his England days will be numbered.

As for long-term planning, the trouble is that no matter how far ahead England, or particularly Jack Rowell, may be trying to look, the only thing that tends to matter in the Five Nations is winning the next match. That said, if Laurie Mains's

New Zealand of 1995 are any example, the 1999 World Cup should effectively start here. Mains coached the All Blacks to what at the time were some of the more humiliating defeats in their history, but when it came to the World Cup proved it had been for the greater good by developing a team who ought to have won it.

Whether the Five Nations are willing to be as stoically patient is another matter, though the

England manager did pose the question earlier this season whether English rugby would accept a number of defeats in the wider interest. Rowell will have his answer if and when England lose either in Paris or subsequently, and if the reaction to the pre-Christmas performances against South Africa and Western Samoa is anything to go by it will probably be no.

Elsewhere we can already see

a New Zealand-style process taking shape. Wales miss out on the first championship Saturday but the new coach, Kevin Bowring, has already given himself a new team by his selection to play Italy tonight. Ireland and Scotland also have new coaches, though the mood in the former appears to be considerably more optimistic than in the latter. Perhaps it was ever thus. As ever, however, the championship will in essence

depend on how well France perform, and initially on how far they exorcised their demons by beating the perfidious English in the third-place World Cup match in Pretoria. If they have, they have the wit, flair, imagination and even these days common sense – all the things to which England endlessly say they "aspire" – not only to win on Saturday but go on to their first Grand Chelem in nine years.



England expects: Will Carling celebrates the 1995 Grand Slam but is now facing the greatest challenge of his captaincy Photograph: Dylan Martinez/Reuters

Questions of Sport



£40,000 to be won

Today we are giving you another sporting chance of an instant win. In Saturday's paper, there was a Questions Of Sport multi-choice scratch card which, if you answer three sporting questions correctly, gives you the chance of an instant cash prize from £1 to £1,000. You don't have to be an obsessive fan to play – a good general sporting knowledge should suffice. But remember, you only get one chance to answer each question, so if you are in any doubt, check it out. The card contains eight games so you can play daily through to Friday 19 January. And as well as the daily instant cash prizes there is a weekly accumulator prize of £5,000.

HOW TO PLAY

Today we are playing the section of the card dated Tuesday 16 January. Below are three sporting questions, each with three possible answers coded as A, B and C. Scratch off your answer to Question Thirteen, either A, B or C in the Q13 column then repeat for Q14 and Q15.

THE QUESTIONS

Q13 How far is a half-marathon, to the nearest mile?
A: 10 miles
B: 13 miles
C: 15 miles

Q14 Who is Britain's most successful Olympic rower?

A: Steve Redgrave
B: Matthew Pinsent
C: Daley Thompson

Q15 For which team did Ronnie Radford score the historic goal that knocked Newcastle United out of the FA Cup in 1977?

A: Stockport County
B: Yeovil Town
C: Hereford United

RULES AS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

IMPORTANT

Scratch off ONE letter only for each question. If you reveal three identical cash amounts on any one section on any one day, you win that amount. After you have played the last game on your card, total the cash amounts you have revealed. If your total is £5,000 you win or share the £5,000 accumulator prize. You could also win today's instant prize of £100 by revealing an asterisk.

HOW TO CLAIM

If you have revealed three identical cash amounts of £5 or under, DO NOT PHONE. Take the claim coupon OR a piece of plain paper with your name and address on it PLUS the relevant section of the card to one of the newsgagents listed below. For prizes over £5, phone 01254 683666 (Irish Republic 0044 1254 683666) between 10.30am and 4pm Monday to Saturday. Participating newsgagents: WH Smith, John Menzies, Foruways, Martins/RS, McColl, Dillons, Gibbs, Macs, Supercigs, United News Shops, Star News, K Balfour, Eason, GT News, Paperchain – Village Store, Paper Shop. If you have any difficulty redeeming your card and coupon for a prize send both to: Independent Questions Of Sport claims, PO Box 60, Burnley, BB10 1SH.

SOME OF OUR WINNERS SO FAR:

Marion Wilkinson from Leeds, Yorkshire – £1000
Mary Pattinson from Penworth, Lancashire – £500
Jeremy Bennellachart from Chiswick, London – £250
John Howley from Leeds, Yorkshire – £100
Paul Garner from Bangor, Gwynedd – £50
Susan Baker from London – £25
Stephen Inslay from Lancaster, Lancashire – £10

QUESTIONS OF SPORT CLAIM COUPON

Tuesday 16 January 1996
To claim prizes up to £5

DO NOT PHONE

Take this coupon to any of the participating Newsgagents listed who will give you your prize instantly.

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To the Newsgagent: Please check the card is correct and give the reader the value of their prize. Send this coupon or details supplied on plain paper together with the winning card to your head office for full redemption.

Junior clubs appeal for unity

There are faint sounds of unity emerging from beneath the rubble of Sunday's Special General Meeting of the Rugby Football Union in Birmingham, which left the game in apparent disarray and in very real danger of being split wide open on the professionalism debate.

Delegates ended up neither debating nor voting on the RFU Commission report into professionalism, and there is now a possibility of the top clubs – a minority in the RFU – setting off down their own path to the paid ranks and leaving the rest – the majority of clubs – to fend for themselves on the bumpy road of amateurism.

But last night there was a plea to the senior clubs from a schoolteacher, Dave Hiles. He is a lifelong member of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers and it was his intervention which forced the RFU to reconvene the SGM within six weeks to discuss the Commission Report.

Hiles, who has been secretary of Pinner and Grammarians

Sunday's dissenters are not seeking a schism, reports David Llewellyn

(Middlesex Two) for 19 years, said: "I would say to the senior clubs that the meeting was not conclusive, we did not have time to debate the 40 points of the commission's report. So don't give a knee-jerk reaction to it and go your own way in the next four or five weeks. Wait and see what the next meeting decides."

Hiles, who typifies the grassroots of the game by still playing rugby at the age of 57, explained: "I fear a schism and I do not want the tail, the junior clubs, wagging the dog, the senior clubs. Anyway, there is no reversing the way they have gone. But after yesterday's meeting it was suggested to me that, since the senior clubs have their own organisation, then the junior clubs ought to have their own as well. But that to me would be the end of everything. A schism would be devastating for the game."

"I back professionalism. I think the game has to move for-

ward and we have to accept it. But we have to have the RFU back in the driving seat, making the initiatives rather than responding to them when they come from elsewhere."

Vic Jenkins, secretary of Ivel Barbarians, who play in Somerset Two, echoed Hiles: "I wouldn't say there is a strong feeling about amateurism and professionalism in our club, but this is the biggest thing that has happened to rugby in the last 100 years, and we all feel that clubs should be allowed to vote on the recommendations contained in the report."

"I do not foresee a schism in the game. I believe there will be professionals and amateurs under the same umbrella. The meeting was not about professionalism, it was simply about democracy. About clubs being allowed to vote and having a say in their game. There are things in the commission report that

people have to be careful about. There is a lot of money coming into the game and the grassroots of rugby must ensure that it is looked after."

There is no anger or indignation in Turnbridge Wells, either, where club chairman David Corry – father of the Bristol Barrage, Martin – said: "It would appear that there are two camps, that there would seem to be a groundswell for people who don't want things to change. Yet clearly at the top things have already changed and we at Turnbridge Wells certainly think it is wrong to put any brake on it at this stage. People have suggested we go back to how things were, but as far as I am concerned we don't have anything to go back to."

Despite his impressions after the meeting, Corry is optimistic about the outcome. "I would hope that both camps could be united, because as far as the future of the game is concerned I would firmly be of the view that the game has to be administered by one body and one body only."

Young Wales begin a game of patience

Steve Bale looks at the task facing the Principality against improving Italy tonight

If this sounds like a repeating record, it is because every Wales coach says what follows. Yesterday both Kevin Bowring and Allan Lewis, coach and assistant, pleaded for patience when their team of infinite promise and infinite inexperience play Italy at Cardiff Arms Park tonight.

The trouble is that patience, whether it be from those who attend the Arms Park or the Welsh Rugby Union itself in its attitude to national coaches, has not been a ready virtue. Ask Tony Gray, John Ryan, Ron Waldron or Alan Davies. Or even Alex Evans, who went home to Australia thinking the world of Welsh rugby's potential but the worst of some of its supporters.

In keeping with the spirit of Bowring's request, however, if ever there was a time for patience this is it. Provided a team containing five new caps and a list of others with only a handful can get through this match and then this season without suf-

fering the indignities of various recent predecessors, there is every prospect of a bright future. As for Wales, it is a big proviso. The Italians proved themselves only 10 days ago – when they scored four tries to one in beating Scotland 29-17 in a game that was a full international in all but name – to be worthy opponents, worthier even than the side who caused Wales great inconvenience in the World Cup qualifier in Cardiff 15 months ago. The Welsh, held 1-1 in tries, were relieved to win 29-19.

As Bowring is a new coach, albeit a professional one, he is pleading for patience for himself as much as his team. "It's going to take time," he said – and as he has been appointed for four years he perhaps has more than some of his forerunners. His ambition for "more expan-

sive, dynamic and expressive" rugby is curiously reminiscent of Jack Rowell's with England and Bowring has picked a team who could hardly play it otherwise.

Thus a heavy responsibility falls on Arwel Thomas, 21, the new outside-half carrying the Jonathan Davies millions to bring his backs into play far more than Neil Jenkins's wont for Wales, if only on the basis that as Thomas's place-kicking cannot hope to compare with the absent Jenkins's Wales had better get on with scoring some tries.

Would that it were so simple. Tonight's match is of incalculable importance to Italy in their campaign to turn the Five Nations into Six. "We know the subject is under debate," their captain, Massimo Cuttitta, said, and if his team act accordingly the Welsh youngsters will find

this taste of Test rugby less palatable than they do in the posters advertising the match in the Principality.

Apparently they enjoy "eating Italians" but a cautionary word from Allan Lewis indicates otherwise. "The gap between Wales and Italy is closing rapidly," he said. "We will see if it still exists. I hope the public realise how big a challenge it is going to be for these young players. I would have been terrified at their age but they are all quite relaxed."

And ready to tuck in? Wales (vs Italy, tonight, Cardiff): I Thomas; 1 Evans; 2 Davies; 3 Davies; 4 Davies; 5 Davies; 6 Davies; 7 Davies; 8 Davies; 9 Davies; 10 Davies; 11 Davies; 12 Davies; 13 Davies; 14 Davies; 15 Davies; 16 Davies; 17 Davies; 18 Davies; 19 Davies; 20 Davies; 21 Davies; 22 Davies; 23 Davies; 24 Davies; 25 Davies; 26 Davies; 27 Davies; 28 Davies; 29 Davies; 30 Davies; 31 Davies; 32 Davies; 33 Davies; 34 Davies; 35 Davies; 36 Davies; 37 Davies; 38 Davies; 39 Davies; 40 Davies; 41 Davies; 42 Davies; 43 Davies; 44 Davies; 45 Davies; 46 Davies; 47 Davies; 48 Davies; 49 Davies; 50 Davies; 51 Davies; 52 Davies; 53 Davies; 54 Davies; 55 Davies; 56 Davies; 57 Davies; 58 Davies; 59 Davies; 60 Davies; 61 Davies; 62 Davies; 63 Davies; 64 Davies; 65 Davies; 66 Davies; 67 Davies; 68 Davies; 69 Davies; 70 Davies; 71 Davies; 72 Davies; 73 Davies; 74 Davies; 75 Davies; 76 Davies; 77 Davies; 78 Davies; 79 Davies; 80 Davies; 81 Davies; 82 Davies; 83 Davies; 84 Davies; 85 Davies; 86 Davies; 87 Davies; 88 Davies; 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Major clubs threaten to break away



Rugby Union
STEVE BALE

English rugby union was in further disarray last night as the major clubs held a hastily convened emergency meeting in London which will push ahead with professionalism even though it has now become more likely to mean breaking away from the Rugby Football Union.

Yesterday the 11 clubs which form English First Division Rugby Ltd made it clear that if the RFU membership reimposes amateurism, as threatened when a second special general meeting is held within the next six weeks, they would have no alternative but to secede. Professionalism has already gone too far.

This declaration follows the chaotic scenes at the special meeting held in Birmingham on Sunday when first the RFU executive's unanimous nominee to be its own chairman was easily beaten by a grass-roots candidate and second when the meeting adjourned itself so that there could be a formal debate and vote on the abandonment of amateurism after 125 years.

In the meantime, the union will use an independent body to analyse questionnaires it receives from clubs in response to the widely praised report of the RFU commission on professionalism which the first special general meeting declined to discuss. David Robinson, a senior RFU committee man, made it clear that if the mem-

bership then insists on untrammelled amateurism, England would have to withdraw from the International Board.

The temper of delegates representing the mass of the RFU's 2,000 or so clubs and affiliated bodies was clear by the end of Sunday's shambles, many at the International Convention Centre wanting no truck with professionalism at any level. Cliff Brittle, the new chairman and therefore the choice of most of them, now faces the unenviable task of dissuading them.

Yesterday he was back home on the Isle of Man after seeing off John Jeavons-Fellows by a landslide vote of 647-332. "There is an overwhelming desire to accept what the International Board announced in

August, albeit the way they did it might have caused great problems," he said. "But the information I've got is that the general membership of the union accept a seamless game."

"Seamless" is RFU-speak for allowing every club to make its own choice about professionalism, and Brittle's remarks will come as a considerable relief to EFDR, which comprises the current First Division of the Courage Clubs' Championship plus Northampton, the Second Division leaders.

But if the worst came to the worst at the special meeting, the small clubs were left in no doubt last night of the consequences. "I don't think anybody, bottom-line, wants to break away, but if the junior end of the

game forces the issue at a second special general meeting then there will be little alternative," Tony Russ, the Leicester rugby director, said.

The big clubs' concern is mixed with incredulity that the RFU has been unable to explain that for nearly all its membership the open game adopted by the IB will make no difference. "I just can't see what they have to fear from professionalism, because the amateur game will simply go on as before as it does in soccer and cricket and even rugby league," John Quin, the Bath secretary, said.

The fact that the England team, not to mention the rest of the world, are already professionals and that the likes of Bath and Leicester are already

putting their own forms of professionalism in place ready for the end of the season makes the delay caused by the calling of the second meeting highly inconvenient.

"One upshot of the Birmingham meeting could be that the international players might be rather concerned at the turn of events and be prepared to throw in their lot with the clubs to protect their interests," David Tyler, Bristol's club administrator, said.

"There is no doubt that whoever controls the top players will control what happens at the top end of the game and if we get them on board with us we can then get on to television and sponsors with a clearly defined and attractive product."

"We haven't got time to wait

for another special meeting because we are talking about next season and the issue is far too urgent to be left any longer."

There was comfort for the RFU from one unlikely source last night, however. The normally belligerent Mike Coley, Gloucester's chief executive and the official spokesman for EFDR, said: "Eleven clubs out of 2,000 are not that important in the context of a meeting like that and we weren't much more than observers really. We've said we don't want to run rugby, only the top professional end of the game, and I actually don't believe that in the end they will vote for an amateur game."

Small clubs appeal for unity. Five Nations focus, page 22

No place for Stott in FA deliberations

Football
GUY HODGSON

England yesterday nominated the men who will choose the successor to Terry Venables, and a bold look to the future it was not.

The five-man Football Association sub-committee is notable for the lack of professional playing or managerial experience, while the average age of its members is not so much nudging the retirement number of 65 as assaulting it.

The two unheralded king-makers are Keith Wiseman and Chris Wilcox, who join the FA chairman, Sir Bert Millichip (81), the international committee chairman, Noel White (66), and the chief executive, Graham Kelly (50).

Wiseman, a 50-year-old lawyer and director of Southampton, also serves as the England delegate on UEFA's club competitions committee, while 72-year-old Wilcox is a JP and the FA vice-chairman. He represents Gloucestershire on the FA Council.

The most notable absentee is the Oldham chairman, Ian Stott, one of three men who chose Venables two years ago. It was Stott's attack on the process to extend Venables' contract which some claim crystallised the coach's decision to leave after Euro 96.

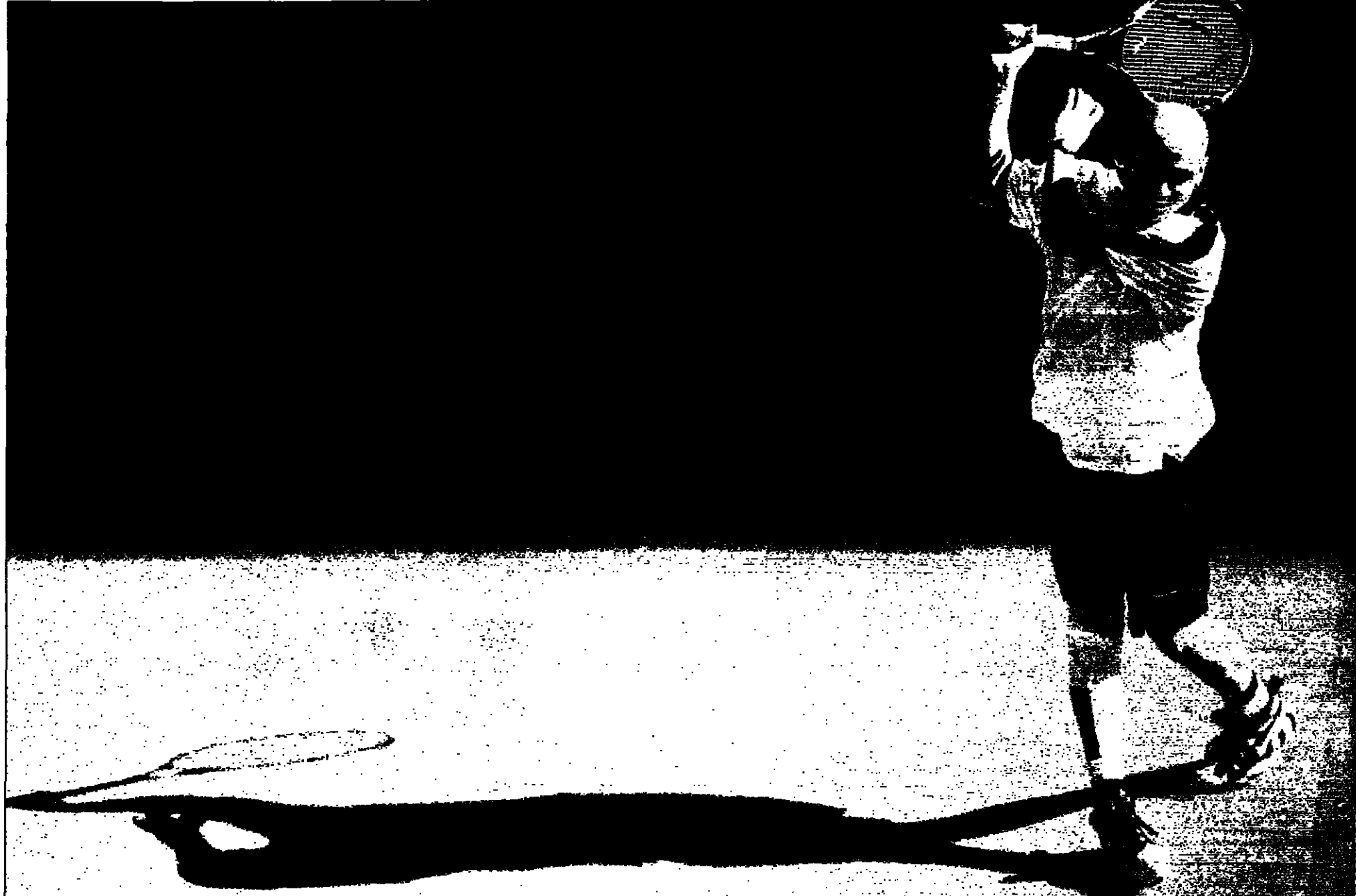
The FA insist he has not been snubbed, explaining: "When Ian Stott was on the previous sub-committee he was the representative of the Premier League as Oldham were in the Premier League then. That role is now filled by Keith Wiseman."

The first task will be to draw up a short-list, and Kelly insisted they will ignore the initial protests of several candidates, Kevin Keegan and Gerry Francis included, who have said they are not interested. "Nobody is ruled out and nobody is ruled in," he said. The option also remains for Jimmy Armfield to canvass opinion in the game, as he did before Venables was appointed.

The FA meanwhile, has halted its attempts to mediate in the dispute between Venables and Alan Sugar. A statement said: "Some progress was made. The mediation process has now been halted for the time being."

The mediator - Mr Charles Woodhouse of Farrer and Co - is extremely grateful to Mr Sugar and Mr Venables and those advising them for the immensely positive attitude they have shown in trying to find a solution."

This morning Venables names his squad for a training session at Bisham Abbey next week, and later flies to Warsaw to discuss the programme of qualifiers for the 1998 World Cup finals.



Shadow of a doubt: Andre Agassi battles against injury and back from the brink of defeat at the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday

Photograph: Chris Cole/Emics

Agassi takes steps to avoid a painful exit

Tennis

Andre Agassi's defence of his Australian Open crown nearly came to grief in the first round at Flinders Park in Melbourne yesterday when he stumbled against a combination of a spiral staircase and an unknown qualifier, Gaston Etis of Argentina.

Agassi, the world No 2, was hampered by a knee injury, sustained when he fell into an iron rail as he climbed his hotel stairs and, with the damaged joint heavily strapped on court, the shaven-haired American slipped to within two points of defeat against Etis, a clay-court specialist ranked 133.

Agassi finally triumphed 3-6, 7-6, 4-6, 7-6, 6-3, after three hours and 18 minutes - but he admitted afterwards that he would almost certainly have lost if his inexperienced opponent had taken his opportunities.

Etis, playing in his first grand slam event, was twice within two points of making Agassi the first

defending champion to lose to a qualifier in the first round in grand slam history.

Roscoe Tanner is the only man to have gone out in the first round while defending his title - at the 1977 Australian Open - and Agassi looked to be following him as Etis served for the match at 5-3 in the fourth set before leading the subsequent tie-break 5-3 only for his nerve to fail.

"He was getting pretty creative in finding ways to lose the match," Agassi, the second seed, said afterwards with his damaged knee packed in ice. "I felt a bit limited about what I could do," said the Las Vegas, who added he was confident he would be fit for his second-round match against his fellow American, Vince Spadea.

Agassi's hard labours would have been avidly watched by his seeded compatriots, Michael Chang and Jim Courier, who are both in his half of the draw.

Chang, the world No 5, was ruthlessly efficient in his 6-2, 6-1, 6-2 demolition of David Rikl, of the Czech Republic,

while Courier was a little more stretched in his 7-5, 7-6, 6-4 defeat of Belgium's Johan van Herck Chang, beaten in last year's final by Pete Sampras, now meets Jakob Hlasek in the second round while Courier faces Jeff Tarango.

Tarango, who caused outrage when he stormed off the court at Wimbledon last year, was perfectly behaved after a ban on him competing was overturned following an apology last month for his extraordinary walk-off.

The main casualty on the opening day of the tournament came in the women's event, where Natasha Zvereva, the 12th seed from Belarus, went down to Israel's Anna Smashnova 2-6, 6-4, 5-7.

Gabriela Sabatini, the sixth-seeded Argentinian, impressively beat America's Shaun Stafford 6-0, 6-1 in only 52 minutes, while Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, who lost last year's final to Mary Pierce, also had an easy first-round workout against Beate Reinastadler, beating the Austrian in straight sets, 6-2, 6-2.

Betting coup falls flat on its face

Even for a nation of dog lovers, providing a greyhound with a smart and spool new floor might seem a little extreme, but then whoever meddled with the traps at Sheffield greyhound stadium last Friday was motivated by more than simple goodwill.

Bluc was the colour, and cheating was the game. Shortly before off-time for the regular Friday meeting, stadium staff discovered a significant alteration to the traps to be used for five of the evening's races. Each box boasted a shiny new Formica floor - with the exception of trap two, the blue box.

A fast start is all but essential in dog racing, but the only way trap two's rivals were going to get away quickly was if they were wearing ice skates. The Formica

was removed immediately and the meeting went ahead as normal. However, whether the rogue handymen were aware that their scheme had been rumbled is open to question.

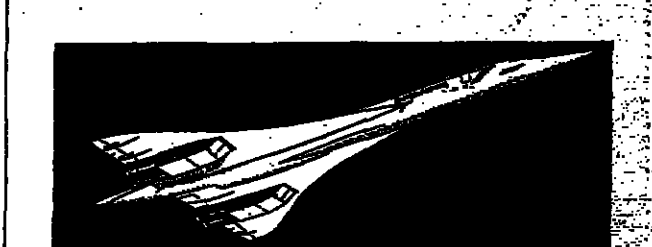
In the first two races from the blue jacket started the warm favourite, at 7-4. The first finished fifth, the second trailed home third. When the traps were next called into action, all interest in the two dog had evaporated, and it started at 12-1.

David Baldwin, Sheffield's

racetrack manager, said that all the traps are checked for illicit alterations before each meeting, and was also surprised that the plotters chose to target the traps used for the card's open races. "They're very hard races where anything can win and the form is from different tracks, it's not as if they've all been running around Sheffield," he said.

The track has reported the incident to the National Greyhound Racing Council, but since any serious skulduggery was averted the case is effectively closed. If anyone is keen to track down the culprit, however, a good way to start might be to find a kitchen fitter in Sheffield who moved heavily into Formica just as the fashionable money moved out.

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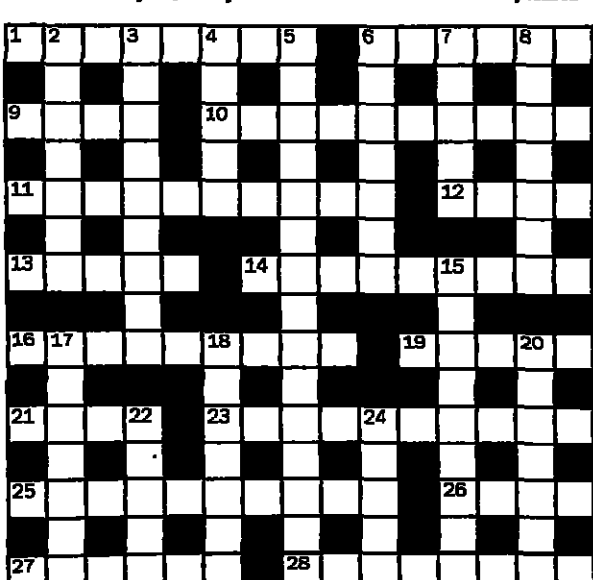
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD in association with



No.2884, Tuesday 16 January

By Adair

Yesterday's Solution



JOINER APOSTROPHE
UR A P R U S N
MOONSHINE BUILT
FIVE FIVE STAR
BASH ABREVIATION
U T A N D E
TWOSE TWITZER
T N M A D V
AERIAL SURGE
R N E E V D R
HANDMAID RING
O Y S A B T N
DIARY VISAFILE
E S G R V C G S
DIAGREEN CHANGE

- Not good to have lots of money on thing involving rackets? (9)
- Capital which injects a bit of buoyancy into company (5)
- Fusion of parents and children? (7,8)
- Drums will give Timothy awful pain (7)
- Summery French dance put on for me (5)
- Agreement to merge hospital departments supported by European (7)
- To dispose of a fibber's body's not right, among other things (5,4)
- Perhaps embarrassed by crude boat; draw another plan (7)
- Sum which has to be accepted by nurses makes one depressed (7)
- Forceful doctor takes wine cold (7)
- Up against one fulminating about name-day (3-2)
- River over there engulfing our country (5)

- ACROSS
- After pointed remark I preserve a defensive position (8)
 - Bill's a constraint for medical treatment (6)
 - Mould is new in a place for growing flowers (4)
 - Not finished in contest, keeping left (10)
 - Funny rope could be called for by a G & S work? (5,5)
 - Pull a number carried by a beast of burden (4)
 - End of renegade, atheist held (5)
 - One's taken in by craftier sort of contriver (9)
 - Couldn't be trickier to make this? (5,4)
 - Breeding place with yen for scholarly pursuit (5)
 - Soundly enhances a wooden working tool (4)
 - Cleaner money could be what we pray for (5,5)
 - Illumination on Scottish town is material (10)
 - Dead unpunctual? (4)
 - Take a feeling on board for gems (6)
 - Pull a number carried by a beast of burden (4)
 - End of renegade, atheist held (5)
 - One's taken in by craftier sort of contriver (9)

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